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**SEQUEL MANIA:
HOLLYWOOD'S
GRAND OBSESSION**
**PLUS: MAKING
"BATMAN RETURNS"**

Val Kilmer cops
the cowl from
Michael Keaton

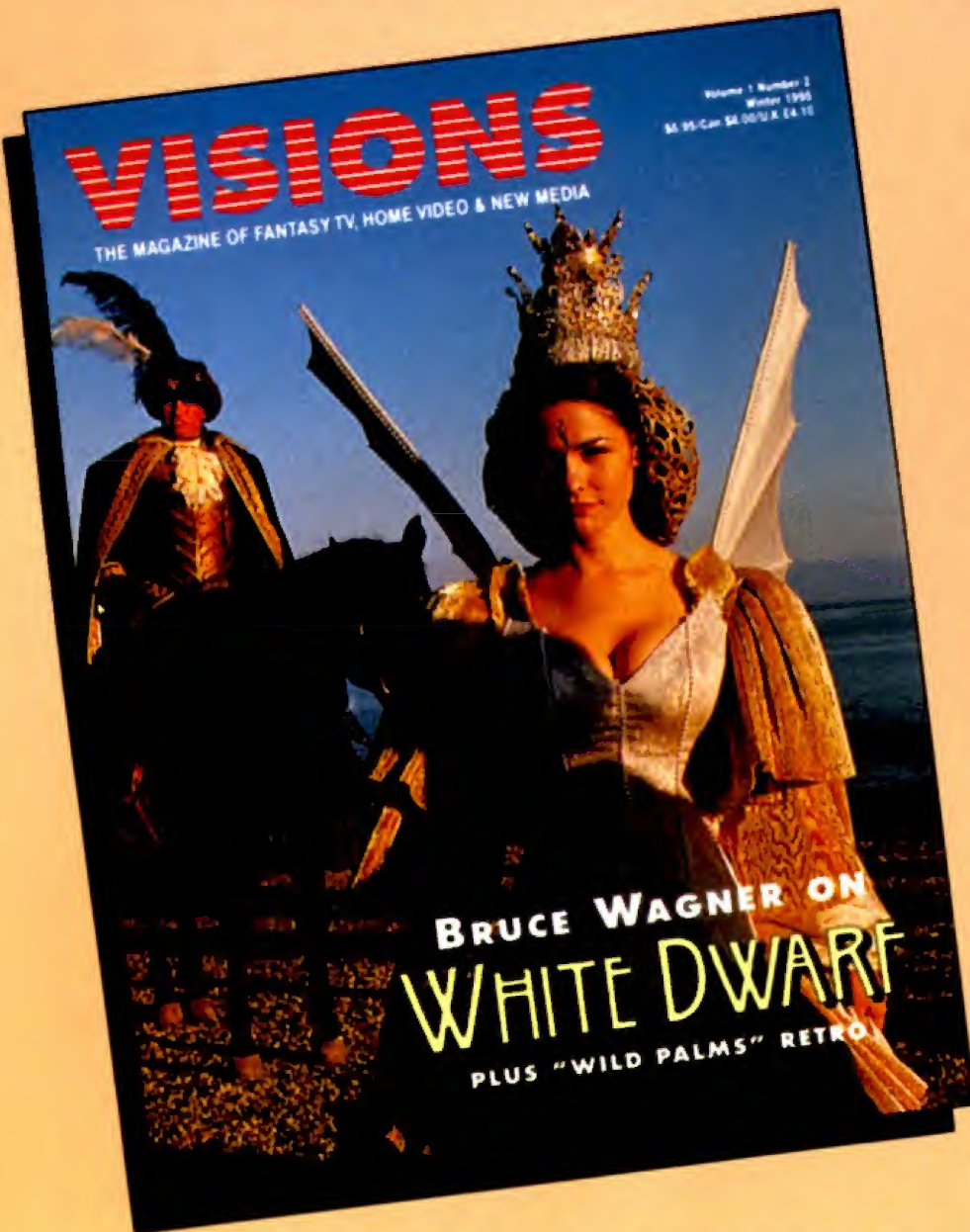
BATMAN FOREVER

Volume 3 Number 1

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NEW MAGAZINES FROM CINEFANTASTIQUE



HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VISIONS YET?

Now that horror, fantasy and science fiction on television has become part of our American culture, there's finally a magazine devoted to covering the best of the new and classic television fantasies!

Visions: The Magazine of Fantasy TV, Home Video & New Media, is born of the minds that brought you *Cinefantastique* and *American Film* magazines. It's the place to turn to for thought-provoking coverage of the latest genre entries on TV, home video and new media, plus in-depth retrospectives of classic fantasy programs. Each issue, our departments—RetroScreen, FutureScreen, CyberScreen and VideoScreen—will keep you in touch with the best of the old and new.

If you missed the premiere issue of *Visions*, then you missed a great cover story on 40 years of Disney television; you missed extensive coverage of the new and classic *OUTER LIMITS*; an exclusive preview of *SPACE*—the new show from the producers of *THE X-FILES*; plus our coverage of MTV's *ODDITIES*, *REBOOT*, "The Mask" CD-ROM; the biggest new titles on home video, tons of reviews and lots more.

Don't miss issue #2. Our cover story is *WHITE DWARF*, the wild new fantasy program from Oscar-winner Francis Ford Coppola and *WILD PALM*'s creator Bruce Wagner. We have an on-the-set, behind-the-scenes report and interviews with Wagner, the director and actors. *Visions* also talks to Wagner about *WILD PALMS* (which he made with Oscar-winner Oliver Stone). Issue #2 will examine the "Changing Roles of Women in Fantasy Television" from *BEWITCHED* and *I DREAM OF JEANNE* to *EARTH 2* and *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*; plus, the latest CD-ROM releases, home video gems and reviews galore.

Visions follows the same high-quality format of *Cinefantastique*, *Imagi-Movies* and *Femme Fatales*: large 8 1/2"x11" in size, printed on glossy paper, 64 pages each issue, with stunning full-color photography and design. Our first quarterly issue hits newsstands in June, but sign up as a charter subscriber now and select any one of the collector's back issues of *Cinefantastique* offered here as our free gift! And our charter subscription rate of \$18 for four quarterly issues saves you \$6 off the newsstand price of \$5.95 per issue.

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Volume 17 No 1



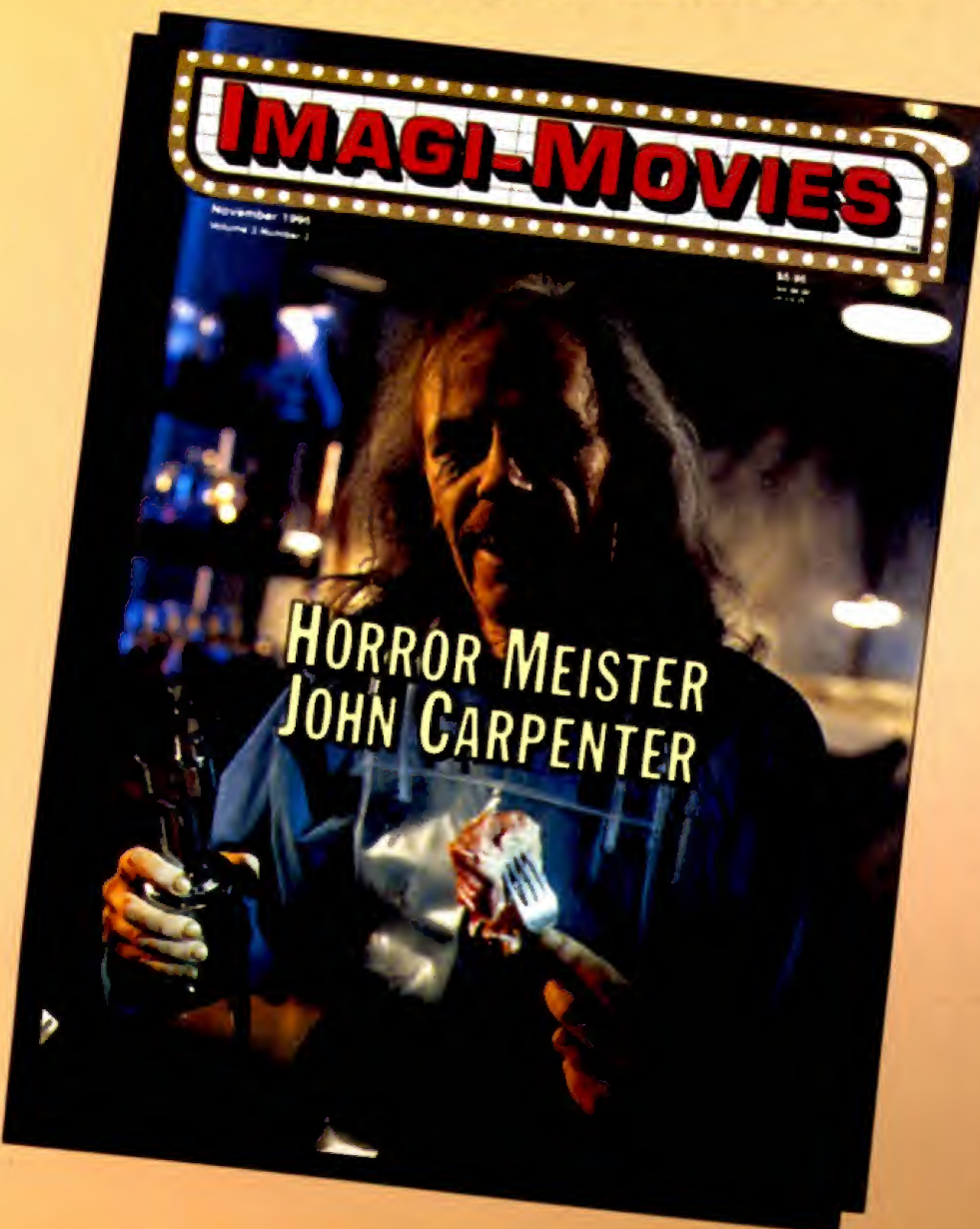
Volume 12 No 5/6

COMING NEXT IN IMAGI-MOVIES!

Don't miss our in-depth career examination of director John Carpenter, including a look at the classic films of the creator of the original *HALLOWEEN* now available on laserdisc. Plus a critical examination of Carpenter's recent horror masterpiece, *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*; and an on-set production report of the filming of Carpenter's *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* remake. Our new issue also features an exclusive excerpt from the new biography *Dark Carnival: The Secret of Tod Browning, Hollywood's Master of the Macabre*, written by David J. Skal (*Hollywood Gothic*) and Elias Savada. Also featured next issue: Clive Barker on directing *LORD OF ILLUSIONS*; behind-the-scenes of *POCAHONTAS*, Disney's first historical animated adventure; a preview of *GOLDENEYE*, the first James Bond adventure in six years; a retrospective on the history of Mexican fantasy cinema, and an exclusive interview with Brazil's cult horror director/star José Mojica Marins, a.k.a. Zé do Caizao ("Coffin Joe").

Tired of the same old King? Do you think *STAR TREK*'s drek? Looking for a magazine that brings you in-depth analysis and criticism of the best in science-fiction, fantasy, and horror cinema? Well then, *Imagi-Movies* is just what you're looking for. Over the course of recent issues we have taken our readers back in time to "When Harryhausen Ruled the Earth," and "Beyond Dracula—into the Realm of the Post-Modern Vampire" to reveal how Anne Rice's *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* overturned cobwebby cliches and revitalized the genre. These and other cover stories, ranging from *WOLF* to H.R. Giger to *WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE*, examined their subjects in a way that the competition just can't match, exploring their context and appeal, the background and history that makes the material so fascinating in the first place.

While striving to remain on the cutting edge of what's new in the genre, we also provide the kind of "Classic Coverage" that serious devotees of the genre have been demanding: reviews of all films in current release; profiles of actors, writers and directors with a proven talent for producing quality work; and retrospectives of the classics that sparked our initial interest in imaginative cinema. Subscribe to the next four quarterly issues of *Imagi-Movies* for just \$18, a savings of \$6 off the newsstand price of \$5.95 and select your rare back issue of *Cinefantastique* from among those pictured above, or back issues of *Imagi-Movies* pictured on page 63. Also subscribe to *Visions* and take two free issues!!



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"The Magazine of Cinematic Imagination"

FALL 1995

CINEMAGINATION

In an "Open Letter to the Industry" (*Daily Variety*, January 31), WATER-WORLD scribe David N. Twohy complains about press coverage given to the film's budget and opines that moviegoers should not care, because the cost of tickets will be the same. Though I'm happy to see him echo (even if unintentionally) sentiments expressed in my editorial of *IM* 1:2, I must take issue with some of his other statements. Mr. Twohy quite rightly rails against reporters who predict the film's failure just because it makes better copy. But he goes on to insist that "[b]ig movies drive this industry" and create opportunity for other films. Furthermore, he advises: "Just shut the hell up until the movie comes out....Then you can decide whether it's deserving of criticism or not."

Well, it's fine if Twohy wants his work judged on merit, not budget. But let's face it: Hollywood is driven by hype, and no one complains when the buzz is positive. Studios spend millions to create audience awareness before anyone knows whether a film is any good, and when one of their behemoths opens in 2000 theatres, the first weekend receipts are not based on advance reviews. Also, it's disingenuous to suggest that such big releases benefit smaller films; filling that many theatres just doesn't leave room for competition.

We'd like to take Mr. Twohy at his word: let's judge films only on merit. A way to achieve this would be returning to the old fashioned method of releasing a film in a limited engagement, so that word of mouth can spread before wide release. This would eliminate the need for pre-release hype and leave screens available for smaller independent films. Instead of promoting a film with trailers, posters, and commercials, just put it in a theatre and give people a chance to judge. There was a time when *THE EXORCIST* could play in only 50 theatres for six months before going into neighborhood venues, and it still became a blockbuster. Maybe it's time to revive that method.

Steve Biodrowski



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EAGERLY AWAITED

SPECIES (MGM)

H. R. Giger takes another crack at Hollywood, providing his biomechanical designs for this \$35 million science-fiction thriller. The script, written by co-producer Dennis Feldman (THE GOLDEN CHILD) is about a genetically engineered beast, capable of assuming human form, that must be hunted down when it escapes from its creators. The director is Roger Donaldson (THE BOUNTY). Frank Mancuso Jr. (of Paramount's infamous FRIDAY THE 13TH sequels) produces. The top-notch cast includes Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, and Forest Whitaker.

July 7



ARIZONA DREAM (WB)

July 11

Emir Kusturica's director's cut gets the art house treatment courtesy of the Landmark theatres chain (who gave us the BLADE RUNNER director's cut a few years back). Johnny Depp (playing another of his many memorable eccentrics) stars with Jerry Lewis and Faye Dunaway in this surreal coming-of-age comedy.

DEATH MACHINE (Trimark)

?

Trimark Pictures was test marketing this film for Spring distribution, which never occurred. Keep your eyes peeled for a typical "stealth release," such as RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3 received a couple years ago.

DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE (Savoy)

July 28

Our favorite replicant actress, Sean Young of BLADE RUNNER, stars as the voluptuous Helen Hyde in this comic reworking of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous tale. The production notes promise us "a startling new twist on the old classic," apparently unaware of Hammer's early 1970's effort, DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE. Amusingly, this derivative premise required no less than five contributors to reach the screen: director David Price (of the lamentable CHILDREN OF THE CORN II) provided the story, which was fleshed into a screenplay by two separate writing teams: Tim John & Oliver Butcher and William Davies & William Osborne (the later duo responsible for the almost as lamentable GHOST IN THE MACHINE).



GOD'S ARMY (Dimension) August 25

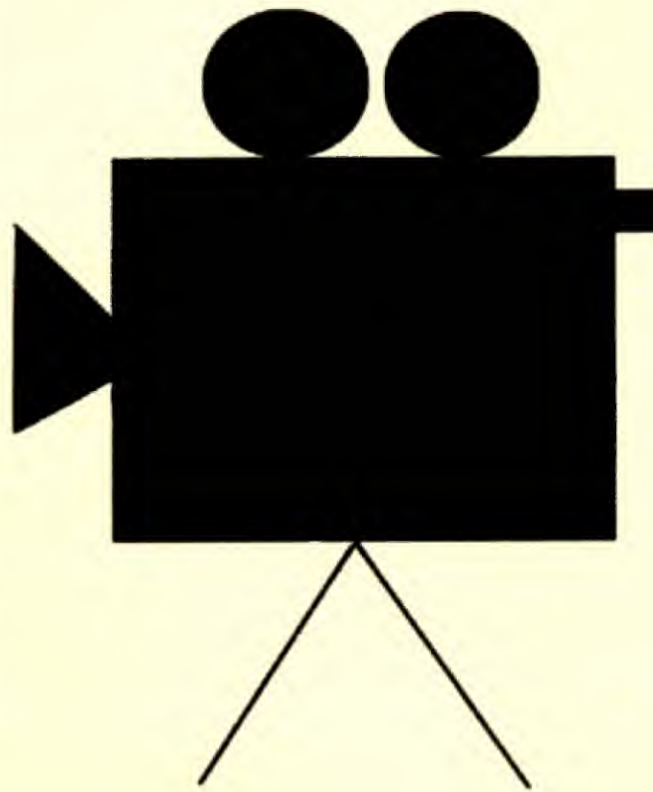
Gregory Widen, who wrote the original draft of HIGHLANDER, directs this apocalyptic fantasy from his own script, about a war waged on Earth by a legion of renegade angels, led by Gabriel (played by Christopher Walken). A former priest-turned-cop (Elias Koteas) and an elementary school teacher (CANDYMAN's Virginia Madsen) battle the forces of evil to save the the life of a child whose soul would ensure victory for Gabriel's legions. Previously announced as DAEMONS, and pushed back from an April release.

HELLRAISER IV: BLOODLINE (Dimension) August 4

Word around Hollywood is that first-time director Kevin Yaeger was booted out of post-production by Mirimax (hiding behind the "Dimension" label, as they often do with genre production) and replaced by Joe Chapelle (HALLOWEEN 6). We should have guessed this project was doomed when Stuart Gordon dropped out during the early planning stages; he must have known something.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming imagi-movies at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.



INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD (Paramount)

July 14

This children's fantasy concerns a young boy whose toy Indian comes to life when placed in a magic cupboard. Somewhat incongruously, the film uses actors and matte effects to bring the toy to life, instead of stop-motion model animation. The results, in the trailer at least, look contrived and melodramatic.

JUDGE DREDD (Buena Vista) June 30

Buzz in Hollywood genre circles says this Sylvester Stallone vehicle, helmed by first-timer Danny Cannon, supplies the requisite number of explosions to action junkies. Faithful followers of the British comic, however, will be less happy about the liberties taken with the source material. Should the rest of us worry just because a few fanatics say commercialism is destroying the integrity of the comic? Two words: TANK GIRL.

MAGIC IN THE WATER (Triumph)

Autumn

This comedy-adventure, starring Mark Harmon, received a good advanced review in *Daily Variety*. Pushed back from a May release, the title has been changed from the obscure GLENORKY, a reference to a Canadian Loch Ness Monster-type lake dweller that occasionally possesses the local inhabitants in order to warn them about secret toxic waste dumping.

MARY REILLY (Tri-Star)

?

Director Stephen Frears and screenwriter Christopher Hampton's adaptation of Valerie Martin's fine novel was slated for summer, but Sony Pictures has pushed it back to Fall. Can this subtle literary character study survive graphic translation to the screen? Let's hope the gratuitous gore effects described in *CFQ 26:3:12* end up on the cutting room floor.

MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS (Fox)

June 30

Every parent's favorite television show comes to the big screen. One can only hope that the state of the art special effects, complex characterizations, and intricate plot structure that are such hallmarks of the series have been successfully translated into the feature—or, at the very least, that a lot of guys in rubber monster suits get beat up.

MORTAL KOMBAT (New Line) August 18

Everyone's favorite video game comes to the big screen. One can only hope that the state of the art graphics, complex characterizations, and intricate plot structure that are such hallmarks of the game have been successfully translated into the feature—or, at the very least, that a lot of guys in animatronic monster suits get beat up.

WATERWORLD (Universal)

July 28

Universal claims to be so happy with this film that they are actually threatening to move the release date up a week. Industry insiders are a bit cynical, however; in a replay of ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES, Kevin Reynolds left the project in post-production after delivering his first director's cut of the picture, leaving the final cut in the hands of Kevin Costner. The star reportedly wants to take the edge off his character and turn him into more of a clean-cut hero. The price tag threatens to reach \$180 million, making this the most expensive film ever.

IT'S NOT CHINATOWN

LORD OF ILLUSIONS (UA)

Six months after its intended February release, Clive Barker's third directorial effort finally finds its way into theatres, and it looks like it couldn't be saved in the editing room. Talented Scott Bakula (QUANTUM LEAP) stars as private eye Harry D'Amour, but the intended fusion of horror and mystery cliches is about as effective as those cold fusion experiments a few years back. At the cast and crew screening, the "future of horror" worried that his film might be asking too much of the horror audience "because it's a character-driven piece." Ironically, you could take D'Amour out of the proceedings, and the events would unfold exactly the same.

August 25

IMAGI-MOVIES

SINISTER SENTINEL

"RAINBOW" AT A.F.M. *But no pot of gold for genre fans.*

The American Film Market is an annual industry event held in Santa Monica, California. For nine days at the end of February and beginning of March, independent film companies from around the world converge on Loew's Hotel, where they endeavor to sell foreign distribution rights to their product—sort of like Cannes, but without the festival. (These people aren't interested in awards; they want to do some business!) Although not specifically geared to genre material, the independent films on display, by nature of their limited budgets, tend to feature a high percentage of exploitation titles, including science fiction, fantasy, and horror. Thus the AFM is a good opportunity to see what low-budget genre fare will be coming to screens big and small over the next 12 months.

Unfortunately, this year's prognosis is not good. Crude comedies, thrill-less thrillers, and awful actioners seem to be what's selling. *Hollywood Reporter's* breakdown of debuting films by genre listed only 11 titles under "Horror" (one of which is TV's *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, retitled *VAULT OF HORROR* for overseas video distribution). Even allowing for the *Reporter's* somewhat problematic approach to labeling (*RETURN OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* is listed under thrillers, for instance), that's a discouraging total. Science fiction fared a little better, with 43 titles, but many of those were DTV items already released domestically, like *CARNOSAUR II*. None of the films screened for potential distributors is particularly noteworthy. One never expects greatness at AFM, but in the past one could occasionally find above-average cult movies like *CHOPPER CHICKS IN ZOMBIETOWN*.

EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE (New Line Video), another misguided attempt at exploiting the erotic subtext of vampirism, takes an adolescent approach that leaves the college-age characters acting too dumb to have graduated high school. *DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORE*, which October Films plans to release as *CEMETERY MAN* (in



Dan Aykroyd, Bob Hoskins, and production designer David Snyder (left to right) appeared at the AFM to promote the children's fantasy *RAINBOW*.

October, appropriately enough), is further, unnecessary proof that Michele Soavi is no worthy heir to mentor Dario Argento. Plotless, rambling, and very stupid, this film nonetheless has its advocates (about a half dozen) but all of them were at this screening, so who's left to buy tickets? *SLEEPSTALKER* (Prism) is the best of the horrors on display, and even that is not very good. Another story of a serial killer who survives execution and takes on supernatural powers (a la *WES CRAVEN'S SHOCKER*), this film should have been called *THE SANDMAN*, since that's where the title character takes not only his inspiration but also his appearance once he returns from the dead. Some attempts at developing characterization don't come off completely, and the surprise twist (our hero is the killer's long-lost brother) is weak. Even though it's nice to see that low-budget efforts can now afford computer morphing, the technique still looks as if it belongs in science fiction, not horror; the Sandman's transformations, slipping under doors and through ventilator shafts with as much alacrity as the Blob, are better when suggested. Not great, but this one is at least worth

viewing on cable, which is probably where it will premiere.

Of the uncompleted films being touted, only a few warrant interest. *HAUNTED* is a co-production by Lumiere Pictures and Francis Coppola's Zoetrope; Lewis Gilbert (*MOONRAKER*) directs Aidan Quinn and Sir John Gielgud in a classic English ghost story, based on James Herbert's novel.

Another interesting project is *RAINBOW*, starring Dan Aykroyd and Bob Hoskins, who also directed. Celebrity press conferences are increasingly rare at AFM (since distribution rights can usually be pre-sold if there is a star in the cast, it is less often necessary to drum up interest for works-in-progress); nevertheless, Hoskins and Aykroyd eagerly headed a panel on the whimsical fantasy about four children who find the end of the rainbow—by actually riding it! Photographed by Freddie Francis in Canada last year, the project is being touted as the first theatrical feature shot on high-definition video. "Every movie starts with a script, and this one just blew me away. It was the most intelligent kids' fantasy I've ever come across," said Hoskins. "When I said I was going to do it on

continued on page 60

Virtual Villainy

by Steve Biodrowski

VIRTUOSITY concerns S.I.D. 6.7 (initials for Sadistic, Intelligent, Destructive), an artificial intelligence criminal created for police training simulators, who escapes into reality and begins to practice some of the violent scenarios he had previously performed only in the virtual world. Sounds horrifying, right? Not according to director Brett Leonard. After the failure of the horrific *HIDEAWAY* to do studio-size business on a studio-size budget, and after the drubbing the film took from author Dean Koontz, who accused Leonard of turning a classy A-level thriller into a cheesy B-level horror movie, the director is quick to avoid the horror label. "It's not horror...very little horror; there are no horror aspects to it at all," he insisted during my April set visit.

When I mentioned that the plot suggests a thriller format once Denzel Washington (as an ex-cop turned convict) must track down S.I.D. (Russell Crowe) in the real world, Leonard made it clear that he prefers the term "sci-fi action" for the film, which Paramount plans to open August 4th. Still, Leonard admits that S.I.D. is the real appeal of the project: "I'd seen a lot of Virtual Reality scripts, of course, after *LAWNMOWER MAN*. Most of them didn't have a sort of simple, mythological story to them. S.I.D. 6.7 is sort of the ultimate virtual villain; he's the thing that attracted me to it—just the idea of somebody made up of all these varying psychological profiles. You can't really go beyond that: 183 serial killers and villains all in one guy."

Screenwriter Eric Bernt likewise sees the film not as a horror story but as a cautionary tale, saying, "Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. Don't stop what you're doing, but be careful. The benefits to paraplegics—being able to play virtual basketball, for instance—are wonderful. But we're reading now about astronauts coming out of simulators with V.R. sickness, because of the imbalance of info to the different hemispheres of the brain. Men weren't meant to live in virtual worlds." □

Obituaries

Donald Pleasence

The versatile character actor died on Thursday, February 2, after a heart operation in December; he was 75. Although he played a broad range of characters, including the title role in Harold Pinter's 1958 play *The Caretaker*, he is perhaps best known to genre fans for his distinguished brand of villainy as Ernst Stavros Blofeld in the 1967 James Bond film *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*. (Previous actors had played the character as an off-screen voice; Pleasence was the first to reveal his face.) He was also capable of sympathetic portrayals (Dr. Seward in *DRACULA* [1979]) and of a more working-class brand of villainy (John Gilling's Burke and Hare melodrama *FLESH AND THE FIENDS* [1959]). In later years he became identified with the HALLOWEEN films, playing the psychiatrist hunting down unstoppable serial killer Michael Myers. Other genre roles include *THE OUTER LIMITS*' "The Man with the Power" (1963), *FANTASTIC VOYAGE* (1966), *FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE* (1973), and *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* (1980).

Jack Clayton

The director and producer of *THE INNOCENTS* (1961) died in March, at the age of 73, after a short illness. His greatest acclaim resulted from directing the Oscar-nominated *ROOM AT THE TOP* (1959) and *THE PUMPKIN EATER* (1964), but Clayton earned his place in genre history with *THE INNOCENTS*, an adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* that is certainly the greatest ghost story every committed to celluloid (*THE HAUNTING* notwithstanding). Though he



Veteran actor Donald Pleasence, whose long career included a variety of genre roles (including Dr. Loomis in the HALLOWEEN films) passed away in February.

directed only a handful of films during his career, he returned to the genre twice: *OUR MOTHER'S HOUSE* (1967), a spooky melodrama about orphaned children who conduct seances to contact their dead mother; and *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES* (1982), an effects-filled version of Ray Bradbury's novel that was not as artistically successful as *THE INNOCENTS*, though still better than most Bradbury adaptations.

Peter Cook

The tall British comedian died at 57. He came to attention as part of *Beyond the Fringe*, a comedy troupe which included Jonathan Miller and Cook's later partner Dudley Moore. His imposing stature

and dead-pan wit were perfect for genre parody, which he attempted most notably as the Devil in *BE-DAZZLED* (directed by Stanley Donen in 1968), which he scripted from a story co-written with Moore. He was less effective under the direction of Paul Morrissey as Sherlock Holmes in *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*. Other genre films include Richard Lester's iconoclastic post-WWII satire *THE BED SITTING ROOM* (1969) and *SUPERGIRL* (1984).

Robert Urquhart

The 73-year-old British character actor died March 20. His only genre role was an important one: Victor Frankenstein's teacher and confidant in *CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1957). He was the first to abandon the cliched hunch-backed assistant of Universal horror films, in favor of a conscientious moral compass who contrasted nicely with Peter Cushing's Baron.

Cy Endfield

The once-blacklisted director died on April 16, at age 80. He helmed one of Ray Harryhausen's best efforts, *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND* (1961)—not just a good effects film but a good film, period.

Albert Hackett

The co-author (with wife Frances Goodrich) of Frank Capra's *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* died in April.

Production Starts

BORDELLO OF BLOOD

The first script by the BACK TO THE FUTURE team of Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale is finally being filmed—as the second *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* feature. Like *DEMON KNIGHT*, this vampire tale has nothing to do with the comic book namesake, which is merely being used as a banner to attract fickle horror audiences, who haven't been supporting theatrical releases as much as they should lately.

DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS

Since last issue, this low-budget feature-length directorial debut by author Don Glut (*The Dracula Book*), not only started production but finished as well—all within two weeks.

DRACULA: DEAD AND LOVING IT?

Leslie Nielsen plays the Count for Mel Brooks. It's always sad when some old-timer starts impersonating those who succeeded him. Does Brooks really think that casting the *NAKED GUN* star will help him match the Zucker Brothers success?

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Brian DePalma, David Koepp, and Tom Cruise combine their talents to revive the popular spy show, with just enough fanciful gadgets and gimmicks to qualify as genre material.

THE NUTTY PROFESSOR

Eddie Murphy stars in this remake of Jerry Lewis's best loved movie. Let's hope it wraps and releases soon, so that we can finally see WES CRAVEN'S *VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN*.

TWELVE MONKEYS

Terry Gilliam goes back behind the camera, directing Bruce Willis, Madeleine Stowe, and Brad Pitt in a script by David Web Peoples and Lisa Peoples. Set in 2035, the story revolves around a time traveler (Willis) to the Earth who tries to prevent a virus that will drive Earth's future population underground.

UNFORGETTABLE

John Dahl, auteur of three brilliant neo-noir thrillers (*KILL ME AGAIN*, *RED ROCK WEST*, and *THE LAST SEDUCTION*), ventures into genre territory with this mystery with a science-fiction twist. Ray Liotta (*NO WAY OUT*) is a medical examiner who, obsessed with his wife's murder, takes an untested formula enabling him to experience other peoples' memories to help solve the case. Linda Fiorentino, who earned kudos for *LAST SEDUCTION*, co-stars as the scientist who supplies the experimental drug.

Oscar Winners

Genre films won in several categories of the 67th Academy Awards. As one would expect, a Disney musical, *THE LION KING*, copped Oscars for both Original Score (**Hans Zimmer**) and Original Song (**Elton John** and **Tim Rice**). *FRANZ KAFKA'S IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* tied in the Live Action Short category, netting statuettes for producers **Peter Capaldi** and **Ruth Kenley-Letts**; the bizarre and amusing parody of Kafka (Richard E. Grant)'s struggle to write "Metamorphosis" will receive a fuller treatment next issue. **Rick Baker** became the only third-time winner in the Makeup category, for turning Martin Landau into Bela Lugosi for *ED WOOD*; assistants **Ve Neill** and **Yolanda Toussieng** also picked up statuettes. And of course **Landau** himself walked away with the Academy Award for Best Performance in a Supporting Role. Unfortunately, his microphone was cut off before he could thank the most important person of all: Bela Lugosi. Isn't it time the Academy rethought its position on limiting acceptance speeches? After all, this night belongs to the winners, not to impatient TV viewers. □



POCAHONTAS

A tent full of animated characters, performing right in the heart of New York's Central Park? Sounds like Disney fantasy, but it was, in fact, Disney reality. Earlier this year, the Disney studio gathered members of the press in a huge tent on Central Park's Great Lawn, for a special preview presentation of two of their newest animated features, POCAHONTAS (which opened June 23) and TOY STORY, due in November.

This was no ordinary press conference or work-in-progress screening—this was a show! After all, not every tent has a screening room complete with a stage. C.E.O. Michael Eisner and Vice Chairman of the Board Roy Disney started things by placing POCAHONTAS in the context of both the current animation resurgence and past Disney tradition.

Last year's aptly titled THE LION KING reigned supreme at the boxoffice, so how do you top the biggest animated film of all time? For Disney Studios, the answer is: diversify. With POCAHONTAS, they have turned to the pages of

Disney unveils its new blockbuster and other animated films under the big top.

article by Mike Lyons

history for the first time, in a film that centers on the real-life romance between the famous Native American heroine (voiced by actress Irene Bedard) and the British Captain John Smith (Mel Gibson).

POCAHONTAS' co-director Mike Gabriel related how he pitched the idea to the Disney execs. In his spare time, he fashioned a mock-up movie poster. With no idea what the main character should look like, he simply drew Tiger Lily (the Indian Princess from PETER PAN) underneath a logo of the title. Unbeknownst to the director when he unveiled the poster, Eisner and Disney had been kicking around the idea of doing a *Romeo and Juliet*-type animated story. Gabriel's

pitch was exactly what they were looking for.

The clips that were shown not only served as a nice preview of POCAHONTAS but also revealed the animation to be unlike anything else Disney has ever done. Interviewed later, Gabriel told us, "These films really have to find their own tone and their own style. Early on, the more we got into the storytelling, it just became obvious that we had some very deep issues and intense themes to get across. We weren't going to be going real far in the 'yuks' direction."

One clip, in which Smith and Pocahontas meet for the first time, played out very quietly, with a minimum of movement and a maximum of dra-

matic effect—not what one would expect from animation. The grace and timing were actually reminiscent of a live-action feature. One of the people behind this scene is Glen Keane, the multi-talented animator responsible for such recent characters as the Beast and Aladdin. In between clips, Keane, who served as supervising animator for the title character, gave the audience a sampling of what goes into the shaping of an animated personality. "[Former head of animation] Jeffrey [Katzenberg]'s mandate at the beginning of this picture was, 'I want you to design her to be the finest creature the human race has to offer,'" Keane elaborated in a separate interview. "I said, 'Oh...okay. When do you want that? Tomorrow?'"

As part of his research, Keane and his wife traveled to Jamestown, Virginia, where he met two Native American descendants of Pocahontas who were curious about how Keane was going to portray their ancestor. As the animator talked with the two women, his wife took their picture, which

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CONGO

Hollywood rediscovers the Lost World genre.

By Dennis Fischer

What dangers lurk at the center of the jungle's uncivilized heart? In *CONGO*, adapted by John Patrick Shanley (*MOONSTRUCK; ALIVE*) from Michael Crichton's best-selling novel and directed by Frank Marshall (*ARACHNOPHOBIA*), the answer is a science-fiction twist on the old lost civilization idea.

Sam Mercer (*QUIZ SHOW*), who is producing the film in conjunction with Kennedy/Marshall Productions, found appealing Crichton's intimations that there is not all that much difference between man

and ape, that the two species are in fact very similar. Humankind have assumed that language ability marks them as a superior species, but Crichton's central simian character, a communicating gorilla named Amy, breaks down those assumptions and forces the people in contact with her to become aware that apes can communicate feelings, emotions, and other common traits.

The talented cast includes some familiar character actors supporting a couple of relative unknowns in the leads, Dylan Walsh (*NOBODY'S FOOL*) and Laura Linney. Shanley's script has been praised for its quirky characters and audacious humor. Especially noted by those working on the film is Tim Curry, who plays the mysterious philanthropist Herkermer Homolka. Rounding out the cast are such familiar faces as Ernie Hudson (*THE CROW*), Joe Don Baker (*CAPE FEAR*), and Grant Heslov (*TRUE LIES*).

"He's a little bit of a loner, and feels more at home with this gorilla than with people," says Walsh, who had to learn sign language in order to play primatologist Peter Elliott, who has achieved a communication breakthrough with Amy. "At the beginning of the movie he's caught up in books. All my research was in books. I had

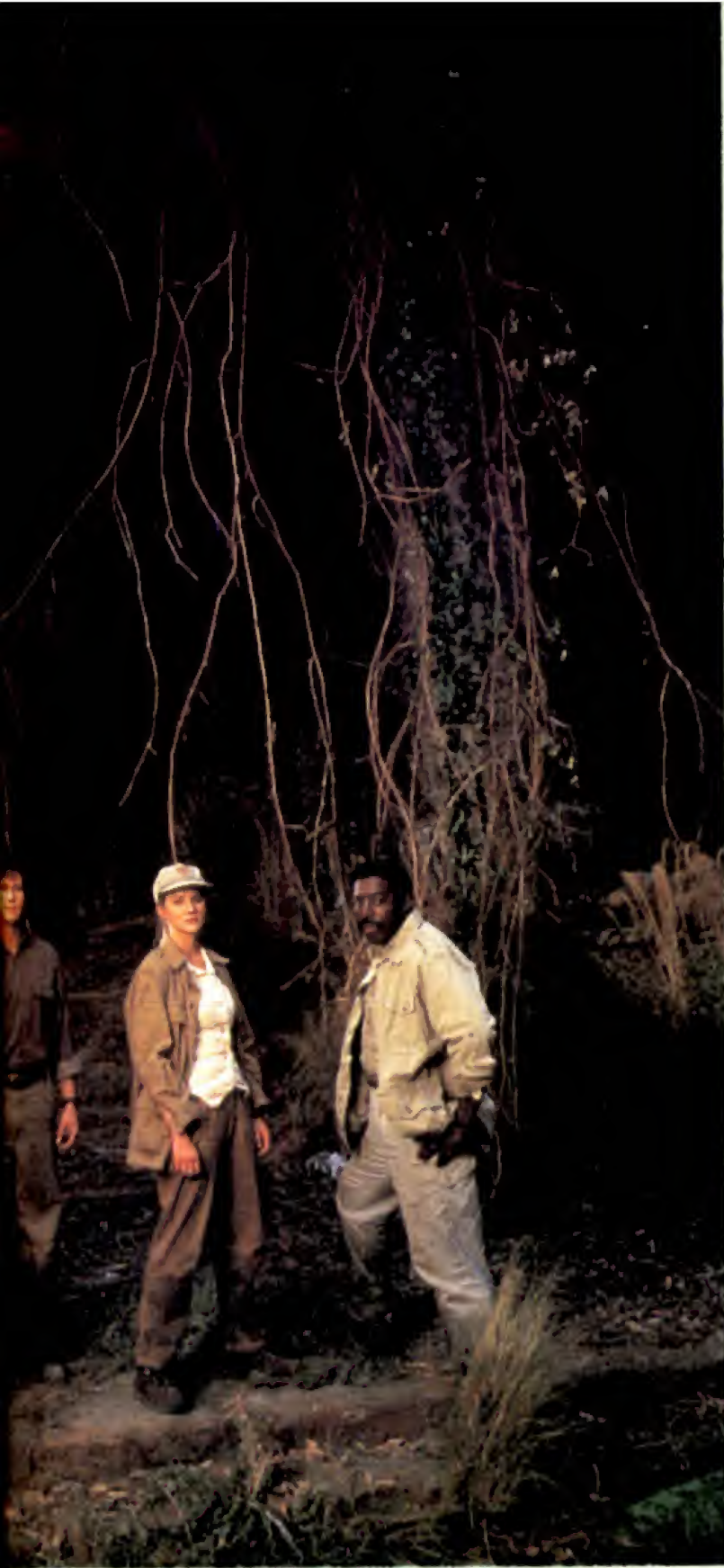
Our intrepid explorers discover a lost city (left), which in time-honored tradition is leveled by an exploding volcano at the climax (below).



to read a lot about primates and gorillas, and then show up on the set and put all that into the work. What I lacked as an actor is what this guy lacked as a character, and that is real experience. He's a professor at a college, and he's suddenly in the Congo. That makes different demands on him, and he's out of place, but that's the real thing—where gorillas really come from, not a classroom or a library."

Walsh's co-star is Laura Linney (*DAVE*) who is playing Congo project supervisor Karen Ross. "She's an incredibly self-sufficient, well-educated, highly trained and motivated woman who, when she needs to get from A to B, gets there and gets there fast," says Linney. "She is on a mission to find her friend and the expedition she's responsible for, which is mysteriously wiped out by some unknown force, so there is both a personal and professional drive for her journey there."

In addition to Amy, the cuddly critter expected to work her way into the hearts of America, makeup effects supervisor Stan Winston also designed the terrifying and intelligent grey gorillas, who serve as mysterious guardians to the lost city of Zinj. According to the story, these apes were



Left: CONGO stars Tim Curry as mysterious philanthropist Herkermer Homolka, Dylan Walsh as primatologist Peter Elliott, Laura Linney as project supervisor Karen Ross, and Ernie Hudson as guide Monroe Kelly. Above: the expedition readies itself for an approach attack by the grey apes.

bred to protect the city and its diamond mine. They were taught so well that hundreds of years ago they overwhelmed their guards and have been masters of the lost city ever since, evolving into intelligent, efficient killers.

Having mutated and evolved over hundreds of years, these creatures required a unique look. "Because of their particular ferocity and aggressiveness, we decided that we would move toward more aggressive animals," says Winston. "The more aggressive animals are chimpanzees and humans, not gorillas. We had a running joke in the shop that these were chimps on steroids: superchimpanzees with some gorilla strength and body sizes, but with a certain element of a human in it because these are mutations, and there is nobody nastier or sicker than a human."

One of Winston's biggest breakthroughs was in the area of arm extensions. "One of the big problems is that there is a fine balance between the strength that a human hand has to control the finger movement in the extension, and the amount of return spring that is necessary so that an extension does not return

with a herky-jerky motion," explains Winston. "What is usually the case is that the more tension you have, the smoother the movement, but the more tension you have, the more difficult it is for the person outside to operate. We had advancements in designing certain mechanical leverage systems inside the hand, so that now twice as much strength could be generated from the hand to the finger extensions."

CONGO was a massive project to mount and coordinate—a task all the more impressive when one considers that producer-director Marshall was simultaneously producing another large-budget fantasy, INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD. Mercer asserts that the biggest difficulty, apart from those inherent in shooting on remote locations, is that filming had to be preplanned and storyboarded. "You have to deal with elements like how lighting and atmospher-

ic conditions would affect the shot, and then you have to consider the technique," he explains. "It makes it very demanding on the director because he has to make decisions far in advance of when the shooting might actually be executed. With the complexity of the sets and locations—and obviously, the adage that time is money—once you get to those shots, you can't afford to come back to them if they're not right."

With its talented cast, makeup marvels, ILM special effects, exciting storyline, and scintillating cinematography by Allen Daviau, CONGO promises to take viewers on an unforgettable journey into a spectacular and exotic new location, wedding the technological wonders of today with the ferocity of our primeval past. It should prove a trip well worth taking—to the cinema. □

The human stars must compete with Stan Winston's scene-stealing mechanical apes: the lovable Amy (below) and the dangerous grey gorillas (right).





By John Thonen

While a positive count might be hard to ascertain, it seems certain that in the fantastic film genres, something in the neighborhood of 30 sequels were released in 1994. While few merit individual consideration, their sheer volume justifies a deeper look at how this filmmaking phenomenon is symptomatic of the creative void plaguing Hollywood in general and low-budget filmmaking in particular.

In recent years, theatrically released sequels have met with limp boxoffice. Seemingly sure-fire follow-ups like **ROBOCOP 3**, **WAYNE'S WORLD 2**, and **ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES** all left strong evidence that audiences will no longer part with their 6-8 bucks for only a promise of "more of the same." The Harrison Ford ac-

As sequels sweep across us like an unstoppable plague, several varieties are apparent: "In Name Only," like **GUYVER 2** (above) and **CARNOSAUR 2** (left); Virtual Remakes, a la **EVIL DEAD 2** (top of page); and the good, old-fashioned Direct Continuation, like **TERMINATOR 2** (below).



IMAGI-MOVIES

SEQUELS THAT WOULDN'T DIE

What has more lives than a black cat? A horror movie franchise.

tion film *A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER* was about the only exception in '94, and it's really more a part of a series (like the Bond films) than a sequel. In addition, it was marketed as the new Harrison Ford film, rather than the new Jack Ryan film, actually downplaying audience perception of it as a sequel.

In the wake of disappointing boxoffice returns for such generally well-done follow-ups as *WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE* and *CANDYMAN 2*, the distributors of *LAWNMOWER MAN 2* have got to have second thoughts about expensive national distribution. A token release seems increasingly likely, followed by a swift trip to Blockbuster oblivion, which is actually the stronghold of the film industry's sequelmania.

Direct-To-Video, or DTV as I call it, is the real spawning ground for the myriad follow-ups to films which were often forgettable in the first place. It's doubtful any video renter is hungering for *WOLFMAN 2*, *WITCHCRAFT VI* or *HOWLING VII*. Yet these and many more are coming down the video pipeline in 1995. Why?

Unlike theatrical releases, which are heavily audience driven, DTV production is increasingly motivated by the needs of video store owners. These are the people who ac-

tually buy the tapes and, in turn, rent them to their customers, hoping to turn a profit in the long run. It is they who are the driving force behind Sequel Mania. If the first title rented well, the 2nd or even the 7th probably will too. In addition, a sequel renews interest in the earlier entries, which have probably been gathering dust on store shelves. With some 90 million tapes rented each week in the U.S., the attraction of sequels to video store owners and, hence, to low-budget producers, is understandable, if not entirely forgivable.

As they have developed into a sub-industry all their own, sequels have basically fallen into one or more of several categories. The most obvious is, of course, the one that most closely fits the definition of the word *sequel*: the Direct Continuation category. These films continue not only the characters, but even the basic story of their predecessors. It's a time honored technique utilized as far back as *SON OF KONG*, on through to *HALLOWEEN II* and right up to most of Charles Band's recent output. Band is the undisputed leader of this style of sequel-making. His Full Moon Studios has practically been built on series likes *PUPPETMASTER*, *SUBSPECIES*, *TRANCERS*,

or the upcoming DTV mini-series, *JOSH KIRBY: TIME WARRIOR*, which will unfold in six separate but intertwined films, to be released monthly. Based on the revelations of Jay Stevenson's article in *IM:2:4*, it may also have been destroyed by over-reliance on this method, but that's another story.

The innovation of Band's development approach has been to design films by putting the interests of the video store first. He has spent much time surveying and even visiting video store owners and buyers. The result has been that most video stores will stock every title in a particular Full Moon series, virtually guaranteeing a reasonable return on Band's production investment.

Band's production approach is a bit different from that of his competitors. "I see what we do as being closer to a TV network than a traditional film studio," he explains. "We do a movie with the idea that it's a 'pilot;' then, if it does well enough, we take it to 'series,' just like the networks do."

Band's method is described by director Jeff Burr, who recently helmed *PUPPETMASTER 4 & 5* simultaneously: "It was like shooting TV. Not that I approached it that way as a director, but I was the outsider there to do a job with a team of people who had been doing it



LEPRECHAUN 2 is typical of the current trend—a sequel to a film no one liked in the first place.

for some time. That's the same way TV works. I had a staff d.p., a staff producer, a staff makeup and effects crew—everything except a staph infection," laughs Burr.

Of course, even the most popular TV series eventually wear out their welcome, and recent sales for some Full Moon series have suggested the same is happening to them. However, Band seems

UNDYING SEQUELS

RESURRECTING THE DEAD

To keep the franchise going, you've got to bring back those monsters.

By Randy Palmer & Steve Biodrowski

Dracula, Freddy Krueger, Godzilla, Frankenstein's Monster, the Wolfman, the Alien—no matter who's who (or what's what), they all have one thing in common: the ability to be resurrected, reincarnated, reconstituted, refurbished, and (bottom line) reused. Film producers are simply not content to let the dead lie peacefully—not while there is still a profit to be made.

Yet, there are only a handful of methods for resurrecting the cinematic undead. These fall into classifiable categories, which can be lumped into two distinct groups: Direct and Indirect. Direct Sequels are clearly intended, whatever their lapses, to proceed directly from an identifiable predecessor. They can be categorized as follows:

(A) The Resurrection Sequel: This film makes a determined effort to present an acceptable explanation for the monster's return, either by bringing him back to life (DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS) or by saving him from his apparent fate (THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN).

(B) The Lip Service Sequel: Usually a film that lies about what happened previously or, worse yet, pretends that merely acknowledging a character's demise substitutes for explaining his resurrection. Possibly the worst example is THE STEPFATHER 2, which reruns the death of the maniacal murderer in the original—only to insist that he miraculously sur-



vived a knife in the heart!

(C) The Lapsed Memory Sequel (often involving Sleight of Hand techniques): Sometimes, filmmakers don't lie outright; they merely hope that viewer memory will be so clouded by time that the illusion of continuity can be sustained while juggling or ignoring pesky details. See, for example, HOUSE OF DRACULA, which explains the reappearance of the Frankenstein Monster with a dialogue reference to HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN; however, these words are spoken to a returning character (Lon Chaney's Lawrence Talbot) who shouldn't have to be told because he was on the scene in the previous film! Perhaps more amusing is Kharis, in THE MUMMY'S CURSE, who apparently arises from the swamp into which he sank at

the conclusion of THE MUMMY'S GHOST—but the two films are set in different states! (Kudos go to *Video Watchdog* for tallying up the inevitable "25 years later..." title cards preceding each successive entry, to show that this film takes place in the 1990s!)

(D) The Son/Daughter/Bride of Sequel: If you can't believably revive the antagonist and you don't want to lie, you can always introduce a relative. Obvious category entries include DRACULA'S DAUGHTER, SON OF DRACULA, and FRIGHT NIGHT 2. Less obvious are films like GIGANTIS, THE FIRE MONSTER and JAWS II, which merely present members of the same species. Somewhere inbetween is SON OF KONG, wherein the family relationship is presumed, *sans* pedigree.

well prepared for this, having instigated films aimed at launching new franchises. OBLIVION is an outer space Western shot simultaneously with its sequel in, of all places, Romania. "We really did it as if it was one four-hour movie," says director Sam Irvin. "We'd set up in the saloon and shoot every scene for either movie that took place there. Most of the cast is the same in both films, and the stories are interconnected, so it wasn't that difficult to do."

The recent PREHYSTERIA 2 and its announced '95 follow-up were filmed in the same manner. Band's deservedly praised DRAGONWORLD is also clearly designed with sequels in mind. The technique has worked well, but changes in the market, notably the coming involvement of major studios in DTV sequel production (Disney's RETURN OF JAFAR, Universal's LORD OF THE DEAD: PHANTASM III and DARKMAN 2 and 3), may spread video store owners' money too thin.

Michael Schoeder's upcoming CYBORG 3 also falls in the "Direct Continuation" category, as the film proceeds almost from the final moment of #2. Schroeder, who cut his sequel teeth on the action film RELENTLESS 2, recalls of that film, "The producers sold it to me as a non-sequel to be called just DEAD ON. I didn't even know they intended to release it as a sequel until near the end of the shoot when they turned up with crew T-shirts saying RELENTLESS 2: DEAD ON."

Whereas CYBORG 3 continues the tale begun in CYBORG 2, also directed by Schroeder, #2 itself bears little resemblance to director Albert Pyun's 1989 Jean Claude Van Damme vehicle CYBORG. Thus it falls into the next sequel category: "In Name Only."

"The second one was originally called GLASS

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Hammer films perfected the art of reviving monsters, as with the Satanic ritual in *DRACULA A.D.* 1972 (left). Other films took easier paths: Universal simply created a new Mummy, Kharis (right), rather than revive Im-Ho-Tep in the 1940s; and Toho gave us two new Kongs, a 400-foot behemoth in *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA* and a relatively diminutive 50-foot ape in *KING KONG ESCAPES* (above).

Indirect Sequels, on the other hand, are less concerned with continuity; in fact, they ignore it almost completely. This second group includes the following categories:

(E) Apparent Sequels are presented as part of a series, but no direct antecedent is clear. Usually, some kind of past history is assumed, but specific events are ignored, including the monster's demise. Sometimes, the monsters are simply back in action (e.g. *JASON GOES TO HELL—THE FINAL FRIDAY*, *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*, *THE RETURN OF COUNT YORGA*), while in other cases, some explanation is provided, however dubious. For instance, *GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER* brings the big beast back to life, but his comatose situation at the film's beginning fails to match the conclusion of any previous film. Likewise, *SCARS OF DRACULA* (1971) revives the Count by having a bat regurgitate blood on his ashes in his Carpathian castle, even though *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* (1970) had dispatched the vampire in London. (This is arguably a case of Lapsed Memory. However, a Category B film like *THE MUMMY'S CURSE* is clearly a sequel, despite slight-of-hand regarding location. Whether *SCARS OF DRACULA* is actually a sequel to *TASTE THE BLOOD OF*

DRACULA is less certain.)

(F) Generic Sequels don't actually revive monsters. In these follow-ups, continuity lies only in concepts and the titles. MGM's *CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED* (1963) tells a new story that counterpoints themes from *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* (1960). *THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE* (1944) gives us a title character unrelated to the original. And *THE MUMMY'S HAND* (1942) launched a new series by jettisoning the best ideas of *THE MUMMY* (1932), taking the single brief image of Karloff as a walking corpse, and creating a new mummy.

(G) The Jump Start Sequel combines elements of Categories E and F: the central character is preserved, but continuity is disregarded in favor of restarting the series from scratch. Examples include *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA*, at least in regards to the giant ape, who is presented as an unknown quantity; *WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON* comports itself as if there had never been a *WARLOCK*; and both Hammer's *EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN* and *DRACULA A.D.* 1972 provide new backstories for their title characters. As in Category E, ignoring past events relieves the filmmakers from having to revive the monster, but sometimes they go ahead and do it anyway, as in *DRACULA A.D.* 1972.

With the sheer number of *FRANKENSTEIN* and *DRACULA* spinoffs over the years, these two ungodly ghouls are fantasy's front runners on the sequel circuit. Though the fiery windmill climax of *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931) seemed to dispatch Boris Karloff's Monster, Universal Pictures brought him back four years later in *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. In so doing, the studio discovered the easiest way to resurrect cinematic souls: tell your audience they never really died! Thus, we find that the Monster fell through the floorboards of the windmill to the safety of churning waters below. To be sure, the old boy was a bit singed around the scalp, but the important thing was: he still lived.

Over the years, Universal's screenwriters found Frankenstein's Monster to be more resurrectable than other film fiends. (1939's *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN* even provided a line of dialogue from Ygor [Bela Lugosi] to bridge future credibility gaps: "The Monster cannot die. Frankenstein made him that way.") *DRACULA*, for instance, posed quite a problem, having staked Lugosi's character (off-camera). In the end, Universal left the Count out of *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*; after all, the Countess was the title character.

Unlike Universal, Hammer's long-running Frankenstein se-

ries concentrated on the Baron, not the Monster, which presented its own set of continuity problems. Frankenstein (the late Peter Cushing), sentenced to death at the conclusion of *CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1956), came back in *THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN* by arranging for an accompanying priest to be substituted in his place at the guillotine. After this close shave (heh), Frankenstein is nearly beaten to death in his second outing, but his brain is transplanted into a receptacle corpse fashioned in his own image. Despite this easy continuity hook, *THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1964) jump-starts the series, with flashbacks to a heretofore unseen creation scene, as if this new adventure were a sequel to a film never made. At the end, Frankenstein appears to be caught in the exploding rubble of his devastated abode, but he was not much worse for wear in *FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN* two years later. At least, he wore black gloves and mentioned an "accident" that made his hands useless for delicate surgery. Having survived this film with nary a speck of lint on his lapel, he met another fiery fate in *FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED* (1969), which was apparently meant to be final. (In fact, the company restarted the cycle with *HOR-*



If you can't bring back the monster, one solution is to bring back a relative. In *SON OF DRACULA*, Lon Chaney, Jr. passes for a descendant of Bela Lugosi.

ROR OF FRANKENSTEIN, a black-comedy remake of *CURSE*, starring the late Ralph Bates.) However, Cushing returned in *FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL* (1973). Once again, the Baron was back without explanation, although the reappearance of scarring on his hands seems to tag this as a direct sequel to *CREATED WOMAN*. Perhaps Anthony Hinds, writer of both *WOMAN* and *HELL*, chose to ignore the intervening demise scripted by Bert Batt for *MUST BE DESTROYED*. In any case, Hinds (pen name John Elder) again left the door open for sequels, but the Baron was finally destroyed by the one and only foolproof method: poor boxoffice.

Christopher Lee's Count Dracula was required to do a lot more death defying than Baron Frankenstein. Resurrecting the vampire king, such a sticky problem for Universal, stymied Hammer as well. After *HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958), no one seemed up to the task bringing him back for *BRIDES OF DRACULA* (1960), which like *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*

is still a direct sequel, thanks to the presence of Professor Van Helsing (Cushing).

Jimmy Sangster (writing as John Sansom) devised the first plausible method for resurrecting the Count, but the protracted ritual of *DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS* (1966) takes nearly half the picture's running time. After the briefest bloodspilling, the Count is trapped beneath the rushing waters surrounding his castle (a bit of "folklore" invented by Bram Stoker, based on the superstition that evil spirits can't cross running water). There was a correspondingly uneventful resurrection in *DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE* (1968), but at least Anthony Hinds—taking over writing chores from Sangster—had the vampire on his feet within 15 minutes, after a drunken priest (Ewan Hooper) tumbles down a mountainside near Castle Dracula and splits open his scalp on a jutting rock, his blood seeping through the ice of a frozen river and onto the lips of the prone vampire.

For the next picture, Hinds

devised a truly imaginative resurrection. *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* (1970) replays Dracula's death, impaled on an enormous crucifix at the conclusion of *RISEN FROM THE GRAVE*, then shows the vampire's cape, clasp, ring, and blood rescued by a witness. Transported to London, these items are used in a Satanic ceremony presided over by Lord Courtley (Bates), who consumes the blood and undergoes a remarkable physical transformation—into the Vampire King himself!

Such protracted techniques were discarded in favor of a brief, almost de rigeur resurrection in Roy Ward Baker's *SCARS OF DRACULA* (1971), which offered no real continuity. One year later, *DRACULA A.D. 1972*, like *EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN* before, firmly broke its connection with the earlier films. Scriptor Don Houghton set an entirely new prologue in 1872—approximately a decade before the events of *HORROR OF DRACULA*, which we are clearly supposed to ignore or forget. The vampire perishes at the hands of Van Helsing (Cushing again). One hundred years later, a disciple resurrects the Count with a ritual that seems like an outtake from *TASTE* overdubbed with psychedelic music. Lee's final foray into Draconian domain, *THE SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA* (1973, belatedly released in the U.S. as *COUNT DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE BRIDE* in 1978), offers no new revivification scene, merely implying that the titular Satanic Rites must have taken place off-screen.

Dracula and Frankenstein aren't the only monsters to experience a rebirth every few years. *THE FLY* (1958) was another screen creature that managed to instigate its own series, although the original "fly," Andre DeLambre (Al [later David] Hedison) was crushed into non-existence when he put his mutated head and arm under a flatbed press. In *RETURN OF THE FLY*, despite the title, it was actually Andre's son who managed to acquire his father's exact same muta-

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BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN is one of the best examples of a rare sequel acknowledged to exceed the original.

SEQUEL GUIDE

Everyone knows that most sequels are not highly regarded critically, but there are exceptions. Instead of beating a dead horse by enumerating the multitude of disappointments, we asked our staff to pick out the rare examples that actually exceed the originals.

BACK TO THE FUTURE II

Sometimes it seems as if the second installment of a trilogy turns out to be the best. Perhaps the boxoffice success that prompted a sequel also granted the filmmakers enough clout to do something a little more daring and experimental the second time, whereas the first film by necessity played it safe in order to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Vincent Price reprised his famous Phibes role to even greater effect in *DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN*.



In any case, **BACK TO THE FUTURE** was truly a Reagan-era conformist's wet dream, in which Michael J. Fox's yuppie character achieves the ultimate in upward mobility by changing the past so that when he gets "back to the future" his family has been transformed from a bunch of losers into a comfortable middle-class menagerie that could have stepped out of **FATHER KNOWS BEST**.

BACK TO THE FUTURE II, on the other hand, unleashes a certain cynicism probably much closer to the heart of director Robert Zemeckis (**FORREST GUMP** notwithstanding). Besides painting a nightmare world resulting from greed ("All I can say is God bless America," pontificates the villain), the film expertly weaves narrative strands; at times, it seems almost like a parody of sequels, deliberately rerunning material from the original, but always tying it in to the new narrative in a clever way. The frenetic complexity left many baffled wimp viewers complaining that the film failed to match its predecessor. (Hey, if you're too slow, stay out of the race!) The lightning pace actually helped pull off the unresolved "To Be Concluded" ending; instead of being annoyed, as in **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**, audiences were grateful for the break. Unfortunately, **BACK TO THE FUTURE III** descended back into the simplistic storytelling of the first film, instead of continuing the powerhouse approach of this effort

Steve Blodrowski

BATMAN RETURNS

It always perplexes me to meet viewers who prefer **BATMAN** over **BATMAN RETURNS**. Quite simply, all subjective judgments and personal preferences aside, there are two unassailable arguments in favor of this film's superiority: no Kim Basinger and no Prince songs.

More seriously, the first **BATMAN** is Tim Burton's most impersonal film, a piece of big-budget Hollywood hype in which talent and quality were hardly prime considerations. The design of Gotham City is somewhat interesting, but the cheesy effects and murky photography fall flat. Even worse, Burton is nobody's idea of an action director, and Keaton, despite his accomplishments as an actor, is no action star. (He's so stiff and slow, you keep wondering why the villains don't just beat him up, but like a Disney movie hero, he always wins, whether or not he earns his victory.)

Whatever its narrative weaknesses, **BATMAN RETURNS** is quintessential Burton, brimming with eccentric



Without returning characters from **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, George Romero's follow-up, **DAWN OF THE DEAD**, extended the zombie phenomenon into an apocalyptic masterpiece.

inventiveness, and not just in the design. The twisted psyches of the antagonists intertwine intriguingly with that of the Dark Knight, turning this into some kind of weird, pop psycho-drama. Keaton is not much better as Batman, but like a piece of a puzzle the character is more clearly defined by the villains surrounding him. ("You're just jealous because I'm a real freak and you have to wear a mask," says the Penguin, and there's an element of truth to the statement.) Over-the-top and wild to be sure, and perhaps not to be taken seriously, the film has nevertheless found an interesting undercurrent missing from the original, in which an out-of-control Jack Nicholson barely seemed to be acting in the same movie with the Caped Crusader.

Steve Blodrowski

THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Though **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN** isn't the first horror sequel (that honor probably goes to **GOLEM UND DIE TÄNZERIN**, Paul Wegener's comic follow-up to **DER GOLEM**), it is the first to surpass its original in quality. Here's a horror movie that truly has it all: great performances, great direction, marvelous music, scintillating cinematography, emotionally touching moments, creative symbolism, charming and witty touches, classic thrills, a dash of philosophy, terrific production design, and a stupendous story.

Though Boris Karloff thought that having the

Monster speak was a mistake, his own brilliant performance proves him wrong, emphasizing the underlying pathos of Frankenstein's creation. Ernest Thesiger almost steals the show as the oddball Dr. Septimus Pretorius, who eggs Colin Clive's Frankenstein into offering up a mate for his creation, incarnated in a short but wonderful performance by Elsa Lanchester, who later claimed that she was forever being asked to autograph photos of the Monster's bride.

Director James Whale provides ghoulish gusto, setting up lively and unusual camera angles and adding amusing macabre touches everywhere. The film remains an ageless delight, set in a timeless past and played across the landscape of our collective subconscious, confounding expectations and pleasing audiences perpetually.

Dennis Fischer

CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED

This is one of the most intriguing sequels ever made, one that benefits in some way from being a sequel, in that the contrast with the original makes its ideas stand out in stronger relief.

VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED is an excellent movie, a fine depiction of ordinary human beings trying to accommodate what turns out to be an alien presence in their midst. Ultimately, however, the message is that what is different from us is also dangerous and deadly, and must therefore be destroyed.

Conversely, **CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED** (billed in the

credits as "A sequel to John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos*," although there is no continuity) plays like a bleeding-heart liberal reworking of the first film's ideas. Instead of aliens, these children turn out to be evolutionary advances on the human species. In other words, there is no "them and us" dichotomy; it's "us and us," and humanity in its present state is far more destructive than the titular children, who use their advanced capability for destruction only in self defense and prove themselves capable of healing and life-saving. The film's message is that we must learn (if we can) to embrace what seems different, because it contains the capacity to improve our world—a somewhat more sophisticated idea than the one presented in the original.

Steve Blodrowski

DAWN OF THE DEAD

Eleven years after **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, George Romero returned to his zombie flesh-eaters with this film, which is much more than just a sequel. With a few more films under his belt, Romero had refined the raw directorial style of **NIGHT**; he also had more money, allowing him to open up story. The opening sequence in a housing project overrun by zombies is mesmerizing in its ability to telegraph the horror of a world filled with ghouls. Romero used the added element of color photography to full advantage by bringing in makeup effects artist Tom Savini (who had worked for him on **MARTIN**), a former Army photographer whose tour in Vietnam gave him brilliant insight into the types of atrocities that can be perpetrated on the human body. His effects were so realistic and repellent that they set the standards for the modern splatter film, and **DAWN OF THE DEAD** had to be released unrated. Romero also utilized the same low-light camera lenses developed for the shooting of Stanley Kubrick's **BARRY LYNDON**, thereby allowing the camera to capture natural lighting in the main location, an abandoned shopping mall. Romero also eschewed a straightforward horror story with a multi-layered examination of the breakdown of social mores, the Age of the Consumer, and the universal struggle to survive, tied together with a healthy dollop of black humor.

Dan Cziraky

DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN

This film is that rare sequel: a perfect companion that also surpasses the original to stand on its own considerable merits. Though very much a product of its Pop Art time period, the film remains a pleasure more than 20 years later. From set

BATMAN RETURNS benefited from the absence of the always unexceptional Kim Basinger, plus a Prince-free soundtrack.



designer Brian Eatwell's wonderful creations, to a fantastic musical score by John Gale; from Vincent Price's characteristically over-the-top performance, to a nearly as delightful one from Robert Quarry—the film holds up surprisingly well.

Beyond these strengths, *RISES* also boasts a wonderfully wry script, co-written by director Robert Fuest, that is less episodic than *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES*. Perfectly rendered by cameos from both familiar faces (Peter Cushing, Terry Thomas, Hugh Griffith) and less well known performers (Peter Jeffrey, John Cater), and enhanced by Fuest's trademark visual flair, this scenario distills the best from the original into a delightful combination of camp and horror.

John Thonen

EVIL DEAD 2

It is understandable why some people might view *EVIL DEAD 2* as a remake rather than a sequel. Unable to use footage from *THE EVIL DEAD*, director Sam Raimi shot new footage to recap the first movie. In the process, revisions were made eliminating three characters and refashioning the story. Despite these changes, the essence of the story progresses from one film to the next.

But in treading this fine line between sequel and remake, Raimi and star Bruce Campbell take full advantage of their second outing. Charged with a greater playfulness, they inject a renewed energy and humor that feeds on and elevates the standards set by the original while never submitting to campiness. Unleashing a rhythm and synergy that, by comparison, appears restrained in the first film,

EVIL DEAD 2, though almost a remake, mines its territory for new thrills and laughs.



Itself a sequel to the 1954 original, GODZILLA 1985 inaugurated a new series of sequels, which contrary to the usual trend (including the previous GODZILLA series) have actually improved.

Campbell's Ash is a complexity of reaction, demonstrating a control over body and movement that complements Raimi's equally dynamic camera.

What results is a film that expertly blends humor and horror, to the greater effect of both. *EVIL DEAD 2* capitalizes on the same fragile balance between delight and fright that sends people down rollercoasters and into horror movies in the first place. It is an accomplishment not easily achieved, and one that sets it above the original.

Matthew F. Saunders

GODZILLA VS. ET AL

Toho's renewed interest in re-establishing the character in a new group of *well-made* fantasies has ensured the big guy's continued existence on the comeback trail. Surprisingly well-made sequels like *GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE*, *GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH*, *GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA*, *GODZILLA V. MECHA-GODZILLA*, and *GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA* so far show none of the

embarrassingly slapstick mannerisms that doomed the first cycle, and continue to showcase state-of-the-art miniatures and effects. In a complete reversal of what happened to the Toho films of the late 1960s and '70s, production values for the new series have actually increased from picture to picture—a *single miniature* for *GODZILLA V. KING GHIDORAH* cost approximately \$370,000 to build!

Randy Palmer

THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD

The first Sinbad adventure from the partnership of Charles Schneer and Ray Harryhausen has many things going for it, as does any groundbreaking work. Stop-motion animation had never been used to give life to mythical beings like dragons and Cyclopes. Sixteen years later, *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD* is less a sequel than an improved reworking of the same elements of *7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD*.

There is no direct continuation of plot or

characters except for Sinbad, last seen betrothed to a princess. (Presumably Sinbad has a princess in every port.) But the isolation from the first adventure lets *GOLDEN VOYAGE* stand on its own without having to assume audience familiarity with the 1958 film. Writer Brian Clemens (*THE AVENGERS*) provided dialogue and characterization several notches above Clarence Kolb's simplistic script for *7TH VOYAGE*.

For example, Caroline Munro's slave girl character, though well within formulaic confines, is stronger and more independent than Kathryn Grant's Princess, all simpering sweetness-and-light. Grant is a child's vision of a protected princess; Munro is an adolescent's fantasy girlfriend.

Similarly, in terms of both writing and acting, *GOLDEN VOYAGE*'s evil Koura is an improvement over Sokura in the original. Tom Baker is a better actor than Torin Thatcher, and had the benefit of a more fully defined character. Sokura is written and played as a devious thug;

Koura is a scheming intellect who uses his own life force with each magical act, knowingly committing suicide by inches. Thus achieving his goal isn't just a lust for power, as with Sokura; it becomes a question of survival.

Technically, "*Dynarama*" is perceptibly better than "*Dynamation*," though the basic process remains identical. Improvements in fine-grain film stock since 1958 make the composites less obviously distinguishable from the non-effects shots. Also, the actors have the benefit of sync sound, whereas the first picture was shot wild and post-dubbed, resulting in the disembodied quality of a bad Italian or Mexican import, as well as reducing actors' chances at delivering a good performance.

Camera work is more mobile in *GOLDEN VOYAGE*, thanks to director Gordon Hessler. Whether Miklos Rozsa's score is better than Bernard Herrmann's for *7TH VOYAGE* is a question of taste. As Sinbad, John Philip Law is, perhaps, less ingenuously heroic than Kerwin Mathews. On balance, although the first film has the excitement of a totally original project, the sequel has the polished air of professionals doing (or re-doing) what they do best.

Ted Newsom

HELLRAISER II: HELLBOUND

While not denying the original's quality, it is essentially a morality tale—of adultery, murder, betrayal—with supernatural consequences. The movie portrays this vividly, presenting the Cenobites as simple servants who collect payment for the wages of sin.

It is upon this premise that *HELLRAISER II* moves beyond the original. Outwardly, its conception of Hell is alien and foreign, vis-à-vis Leviathan and the Labyrinth, standing in stark contrast with Judeo-Christian myth. But this alien quality actually belies a much more palpable Hell, one in which traditional sin is returned with almost contractual suffering. The pain is real, tangible, and inevitable. Innocence isn't a guaranteed protector but rather a guide to safety and salvation. And only innocents are re-deemable, even among the indentured Cenobites.

Grounded in character, *HELLRAISER* pinpoints in disturbing fashion the "mundane" evil that often dwells in the human soul. *HELLRAISER II* grounds itself in character as well, replaying similar themes in its early moments. But it also expands on those concepts, envisioning a Hell of real effects and consequences that is



PUMPKINHEAD 2 is one example of a sequel made to a film which was not a substantial hit in the first place—a growing phenomenon due to video.

SHADOWS," says Schroeder. "It was a great script with no connection to Pyun's film. I did know from the start on that one that the producers planned to sell it as a sequel. What I didn't know when I was making it was that some flashback footage from the original film was going to have to be incorporated, in order to get good European sales. I had to change a scene where [the female android] Cash is programmed with images of the beautiful world outside her industrialized home. Those scenes were much of the motivation for her escape from her creators. Instead, she's fed the flashback scenes of Van Damme that are supposed to get her to accept Colt [her martial arts trainer] as a hero who will help her escape. It works OK, but it was tough to do. That's one of the problems with sequels. Sometimes decisions have to be made that help make the film work as a marketable sequel, instead of just helping it be a good film."

The "In Name Only" group is typified by the HOWLING series. Except for a very tenuous link between Joe Dante's original and #2, the films share nothing except the same core idea: werewolves. #7 was originally planned as a continuation of #6, but producer Steven Lane reports that "lower than expected video sales made our direct sequel too expensive to do for the money we could expect to get for it." In addition, Lane, busy with a larger-budgeted sequel to his

unexpected hit **THE LAWN-MOWER MAN**, passed the reins for #7 to Clive Turner, a producer and writer on some of the earlier entries.

LIVE Entertainment, distributors of the last several HOWLING videos, were considering a "best of" compilation. Turner decided to integrate several minutes of flashbacks, which, he explains "actually establish a link between all the films" in the series. While Turner describes the film as "quite unique, despite its limited budget," the delay of its promised '94 release may signal that he has been less than successful with it.

Another "In Name Only" sequel coming in '95 is the Fred Olen Ray-produced **BIOHAZARD 2**, directed by Steve Latshaw. "We aren't treading on the first film's reputation here," laughs Ray about his 1985 original. "This is a much better movie." The recently complet-

ed film offers no continuing characters or story from the original. "Actually it's a reworking of the first script I wrote when I came up with the **BIOHAZARD** title. We eventually shot a different script [in '85], but I always liked the title," explains Ray, "and thought it deserved a better film to go with it."

According to Ray, the philosophy of sequels being mined by Roger Corman, Charles Band, and others, is that "slapping a #2 or #3 onto a film no one ever heard of implies that the original was a hit that a potential renter just happened to miss. People will assume that no one would make a sequel to a film that wasn't any good in the first place. Of course, it's just the opposite. It works as a sequel *because* no one remembers the original." Ray's oft-stated aversion to sequels finally ended this year with a follow-up to his erotic-thriller hit **INNER SANCTUM**, in addition to his production of **BIOHAZARD 2**.

WATCHERS 3 generated some recent controversy in the "In Name Only" arena, due to a lawsuit from author Dean R. Koontz, who didn't like having his name linked to a movie which had little to do with his work. Roger Corman had obtained the rights to the book *Watchers* when he released a particularly weak film adaptation to some success. Corman quickly pumped out a "sequel-remake," replacing the youthful Corey Haim with the adult Marc Singer but changing little else. For #3, Corman basically ripped off **PREDATOR** and made it part of the **WATCH-**

To its own detriment, **WARLOCK II** intentionally avoids continuity with its predecessor, which wasn't really designed to launch a franchise.



Jeff Burr began an impressive string of sequels with **THE STEPFATHER II**.

ERS series by including the genius dog from those films, in what doesn't even rate as a sub-plot. Koontz successfully had his name removed from above the title, although he still receives a "based on the novel by" credit. The author's suit may help limit the lengths sequel makers will go to link their film with a better known original.

An off-shoot of the "In Name Only" category is the fake sequel. Fred Olen Ray recalls distributors who have attempted to cash in on a non-existent predecessor: "There's been several that I know. Chris Mitchum [who stars in **BIOHAZARD 2**] did an action film that the distributors eventually ended up calling **EXECUTIONER 2**, even though there'd never been a #1. Pete Walker made a film in England called **FRIGHTMARE**. Later there was an American film with the same name that did pretty well on video, so someone bought Walker's film and released it as **FRIGHTMARE 2**. The Italians also did it a lot with phony sequels to **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**, **ALIEN**, and **DAWN OF THE DEAD**."

Ray prefers the approach of his friend and frequent collaborator Jim Wynorski, the acknowledged King of "In Name Only" Sequels. "Jim likes to do

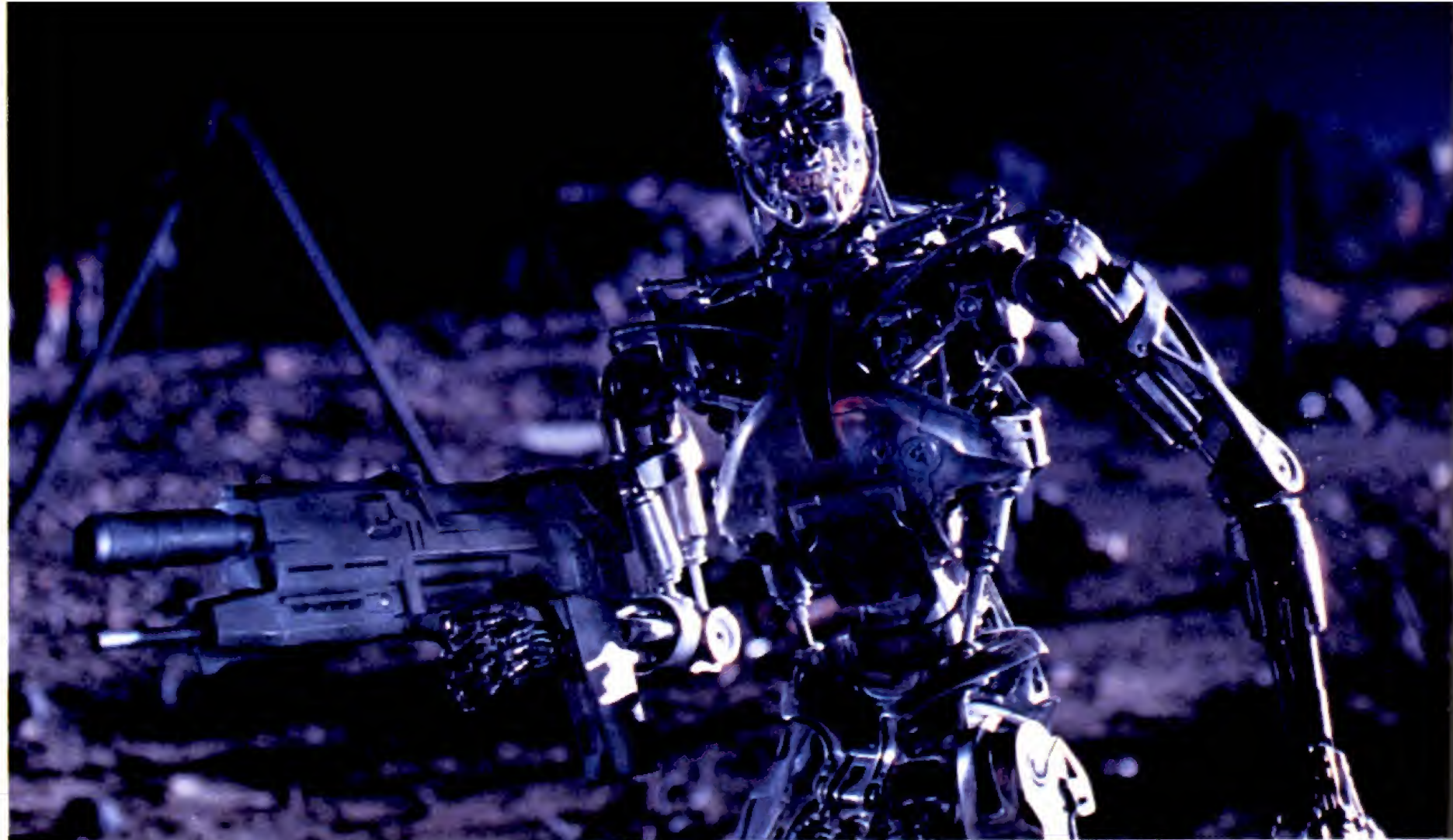
personified not just through the Cenobites but through the shape and character of its sinners. It is this additional exploration that sets HELLRAISER II apart and distinguishes it from the original. **Matthew F. Saunders**

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

Despite mega-boxoffice, rave reviews, and fan adulation, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK was the worst piece of American fascism to hit the screens since the Red Scare movies of the '50s (e.g. MY SON JOHN). Indiana Jones, by virtue of being white and American, is given carte blanche by the filmmakers to kill at will in pursuit of his goal; if he's better armed than his foreign opponents and guns them down anyway without a trace of regret, we'll play it for laughs. This appeal is to the sickest bullying impulse in the same American psyche which had no qualms about steamrolling over countless tribes of Native Americans. And, worst of all, the film's ridiculous deus ex machina ending fully endorses the carnage by telling us that God is on Indy's side. (Doesn't it bother anyone besides me that the protagonist of this film is literally on the sidelines for the resolution of this movie? You could remove Jones, and the Nazis would still be melted at the end!)

If anything, INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM was even worse, but against all odds, Steven Spielberg actually managed to make a decent capper to the trilogy with LAST CRUSADE. Most of the improvements are

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE took a new look at the old franchise.



TERMINATOR 2 upped the ante on **THE TERMINATOR** by several tens of millions of dollars and actually got the money on screen.

negative, in the sense that certain flaws are *not* repeated; for instance, although the trademark action set pieces are still evident, this film does *not* gleefully revel in violence (especially against people of darker colored skin). What the film actually does better is harder to pinpoint. Maybe it is the presence of Sean Connery that gives Harrison Ford something to play off, so that he's not simply the he-man of action shown in the previous outings. Maybe it's the sense of humor. Maybe it's that Jones actually figures a few things out and makes a few intelligent decisions that resolve the story, instead of waiting around for God to come zap everybody. (Doesn't God have better things to do than bail Indy out every time he gets into trouble?) In any case, after a series of overrated disasters, this film showed that Spielberg is occasionally capable of pulling the proverbial rabbit out of a hat. **Steve Blodrowski**

INFERNO

INFERNO, Dario Argento's 1980 follow-up to his visually raucous SUSPIRIA ('77), arguably rates as the horror technocrat's finest work. The second chapter in the director's unfinished "Three Mothers" trilogy, INFERNO is one of the genre's most enduring nightmares; its neo-Gothic bravura and startlingly rich, dreamlike ambience scores as a refutation of every horror movie cliché in the book.

If the gussied-up gargoyles of SUSPIRIA were altogether too loud and the break with linear narrative logic just not forcefully sustained enough, INFERNO boasts an unbroken

mise-en-scene of the unconscious. Argento's surreal filmic tapestry confounds cinephile expectations by providing a hero who is ultimately extraneous and a finale in which the monster, in lieu of the protagonist's lack of understanding, must itself exult in the destruction of its bloodlashed domain. Whole bits of action—a bookseller's rat-covered demise in which he's finished off by the cleaver of his would-be-rescuer, a lecture hall scene in which Mark is distracted from reading his sister's entreaty by the pouty gaze of a mysterious siren (who'll probably turn out to be the Mother of Tears)—portray the inchoate purity of a senseless and deadly night-world of elusive alchemical associations. Equal parts Alain Resnais (the plot's a nod to LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD) and Roger Corman, Argento's film eloquently sums up our fascination with horror movies: we are thrilled by the supernatural because by its very nature it is unknowable. Like the best of bad dreams, INFERNO defies explanations; it requires the groggy incomprehension of a patient, troubled sleeper.

Todd French

QUATERMASS II

As great as THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT was, QUATERMASS 2 (U.S. title: ENEMY FROM SPACE) manages to surpass it in virtually every department: story, acting, photography, music, special effects, and direction. Rather than repeat the successful formula of the original (an astronaut returns to Earth infected by an alien entity that slowly absorbs him—and any other living thing it touches),

writer Nigel Kneale jacked up the stakes with an alien invasion that supplants leaders in government, science, education, and industry, almost like a British INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS.

Though the basic plotline is nothing extraordinary, it is in the presentation—specifically, the slow unraveling of a series of mysteries, each more baffling or shocking than the one before—that sets this film apart. In addition, the technical execution propels Q2 miles beyond its low-budget contemporaries. Gerald Gibbs' oppressive black and white photography was helped enormously during production by a fortuitous prolongation of grim, overcast skies, so the film is permeated by a relentless dreariness that accentuates the meticulously-crafted plotline's overpowering sense of foreboding. This dark background helps make specific bits of the film even more gruesome, such as the memorably stomach-churning death of Broadhead (Tom Chatto), who falls into a vat of alien "food," which turns out to be a corrosive poison that literally bakes the flesh off his bones.

The one solid connection between the pictures is the character of Prof. Bernard Quatermass, portrayed by the late Brian Donlevy. Though Kneale felt that Donlevy was miscast (he much preferred Andre Morrell's interpretation in the original BBC teleplays), Donlevy infuses the role with a verisimilitude drawn from an array of scientifically unconventional mannerisms. Most professorial types, especially in '50's sci-fi, were portrayed as shy, aloof, and altogether rather strange. Donlevy's Quatermass is none of these things; he is a brilliant scientist but also a man of

quick wits and action.

As Quatermass uncovers one mystery after another, the film builds inexorably to a super-suspenseful climax, with an isolated pocket of humans matching wits against the race of duplicitous invaders. When Hammer stalwart Michael Ripper turns a machine gun on the immense domes housing the aliens, a climax of Lovecraftian proportions is unleashed: gigantic, seething columns of black, protoplasmic flesh smash across the terrain in agonized defeat (Earth's oxygen being as poisonous to them as their food is to us). The miniature FX here are fairly respectable (much better than those in Q1), providing an appropriately chilling end to one of the most disturbingly original science-fiction-horror pictures of the '50s.

Randy Palmer

THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN & FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED

Frankenstein seems to do better the second time around. Universal's THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935) is generally considered to be not only the peak of their horror cycle but one of the greatest horror films ever made. While Hammer's first sequel to their CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1957) may not enjoy such lofty accolades, REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1958) nevertheless is an improvement over its predecessor and one of Hammer's best films.

The opening of REVENGE blends in smoothly with the previous film, with the Baron (Peter Cushing, of course)

cheating the guillotine with the aid of dwarfish assistant Karl (Oscar Quitak). It seems that the good doctor has promised Karl a new body—one that he eventually puts together from bits and pieces of people in the "poor hospital," where he masquerades as the kindly Dr. Stein.

What elevates this film beyond its predecessor is its sense of black comedy. Jimmy Sangster's witty script carries with it a subtext—the Baron, an aristocrat by birth, is exploiting the lower classes, using their limbs and organs to build what he calls "the perfect man." Terence Fisher, directing Cushing as Frankenstein for the second time, moves the story along at his usual brisk pace and gets some fine performances: Cushing is more sardonic yet somehow more likeable than in the first film, and Michael Gwynne projects real pathos as a very human "monster." Jack Usher's rich cinematography soaks Bernard Robinson's cluttered sets in rich Technicolor blues, reds, and greens. The film is still fresh, original, and completely entertaining.

FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED was Fisher's penultimate Frankenstein film and also his darkest. The title character evolves in each film, and by this fifth episode, he has obviously become so frustrated by his many failures that he has gone completely mad. Never has the Baron been so completely without scruples; he has indeed become his own monster, callously raping and murdering his way through the Victorian settings.

The screenplay by Bert Batt reflects the nihilism of the late '60s. Frankenstein was always something of an antihero in Fisher's films, but in **MUST BE DESTROYED** there are no real heroes at all. The other main protagonists (Simon Ward and Veronica Carlson) sell illegal drugs, and Ward participates in murder with the Baron. Only Freddie Jones, as the sad recipient of a brain transplant, gains our sympathy. He is the most human "monster" of all, and the scene in which he fails to convince his wife (Maxine Sudley) that he is, in fact, her husband in someone else's body, is beautifully acted and heart-wrenching without ever becoming maudlin. There's no other scene quite like it in any other **FRANKENSTEIN** film made by Hammer, Universal, or anybody.

Cushing was never better, as when he wittily rips apart the stuffy boarders of the rooming house where he is staying: he compares them to Neanderthals, pointing out that, had the world been run by backward minds such as theirs, "we would have eaten this meal in a cave and wiped our hands on animals skins." He pauses before adding: "In fact, your lapels do look rather greasy." *Frankenstein 1*, Victorians O.

Bruce G. Hallenbeck

THE ROAD WARRIOR

This film successfully combines the dystopic, post-nuclear future of Australia's wasteland with mythic Western and "Loner Hero" motifs to

“Slapping a #2 on a film no one ever heard of implies the original was a hit. People assume no one would make a sequel to a film that wasn't any good.”



NIGHT OF THE DEMONS 2 is one of many sequels that fall into the Virtual Remake category, offering little that wasn't seen in the first film.

sequels that abandon the first film and go in a totally new direction," according to Ray. "There might be a few flashbacks, but that's it." Wynorski, who Ray likes to call "Jim Wynorski 2," has taken this approach on films such as *976-EVIL 2*, *DEATHSTALKER 2*, *BODY CHEMISTRY 2 & 3*, and the recent *GHOULIES 4*. Wynorski's fame in the sequel arena was so prevalent that a film he made as *NIGHTY NIGHTMARE* eventually saw release as *SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE 2*, despite absolutely no connection to the first film.

Since they are largely original concepts developed under a sort of "sequel umbrella" (an approach John Carpenter had in mind when he produced *HALLOWEEN III*), this development in the "In Name Only" category might seem encouraging. Jeff Burr agrees, saying, "Sequels are creatively bankrupt because you're building on someone else's foundation. The only real exception would be if you took a totally different approach to the film."

Steve Wang took this approach last year with *GUYVER 2*. "I'm not going to put down the first film," says Wang. "I was its co-director, and it's pretty much the film we set out to make. But afterwards I started to wonder if we'd made the right decisions. So I went back to the character's roots, the Japanese *mangas*. They were very dark and violent, totally different from the tongue-in-cheek approach we took on the first one."

Similarly, producer Pierre David moved away from David Cronenberg's *SCANNERS* and developed *SCANNER COP*. Two previous sequels had pretty well strip-mined Cronenberg's concept, so David chose to combine it with the popular action film genre. Though no classic, the film does mix the action and sci-fi elements into an undemanding piece of entertainment.

Fred Olen Ray admits to disliking sequels of the Jason and Freddy type, which he sees as "the same movie with just a change of location and cast." This is a perfect descrip-

tion of the next sequel category: Virtual Remakes. Oddly, this one is less common amongst low-budget sequels and most prevalent in major budget theatrical releases, such as the aforementioned *WAYNE'S WORLD 2*. "If a sequel has to be done," opines Ray, "then do something new. Instead we get *LEPRECHAUN 2*. Vidmark [the series producer] took a bad film [*LEPRECHAUN*] and promoted the hell out of it to start a franchise nobody wanted. I'm pretty pleased with *BIOHAZARD 2*. I know it's not a great film, but at least we did something different. We didn't just say, 'Well, ten years since the first one, who'll know the difference? Let's just remake it.'"

In addition to the largely redundant *LEPRECHAUN 1 & 2*, the Virtual Remake category includes the recent *NIGHT OF THE DEMONS II* and '93's *CHILDREN OF THE CORN 2*. An upcoming third entry in that series brings the murderous farm kids to the big city. The recently released follow-up *SHADOWCHASER 2: NIGHT SIEGE* also is essentially the same film as its predecessor.

The dearth of imagination and creativity plaguing the fantastic genres in recent years is probably best exemplified in this category. The film's producers don't even have to be bothered with embracing a new concept and developing it into something marketable. Instead, they use the same technique used to sell laundry soap: put the same product in a box labeled 'new and improved,' and people will buy it.

Another oddity in the sequel pantheon is a growing trend to disguise or even totally hide the fact that a film is a sequel. This category gains its name from the press announcement producers usually make, claiming, "It's not really a sequel." This category began when sequel factory Trimark (*RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3*, *PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT 2*, *LEPRECHAUN 2*, etc) released *WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON* in 1993. Despite reprising the lead

surpass its cult-flavored predecessor. Whereas *MAD MAX* defines the series' concept, its appeal lies in its quirky immaturity. *THE ROAD WARRIOR* elevates the premise, finding structure in the outlaw-threatened towns of Western lore, and motivation in Max's redemption as savior and reluctant lawman.

Max is soulless for much of the film, defined by a constant search for fuel in an unredeemable wasteland. His skills on the highway fuel his wandering, gas simply serving as a concrete manifestation igniting his metaphorical, internal journey. It is only when forced into the role of "frontier sheriff" that the same abilities characterizing his decay also precipitate his salvation. Confronted by this recognition, and the ironic yet subtle realization that the world is still defined by the same war over fuel that created this post-apocalyptic future, Max aids the fortress dwellers. The crux of his salvation lies not in personal liberation, however, but in the hope that the fortress survivors can find or create a better life, a life he believes is forever lost to him.

THE ROAD WARRIOR is a more mature film than *MAD MAX*, technically and dramatically. While it showcases the same kinetic action structure as the original, it has at its heart a sophisticated, understated parable. This parable drives the film, granting it a thematic substance that eludes the first movie. **Matthew F. Saunders**

TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA

One of the most handsome of all the Hammer productions, *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA*, marks Dracula's finest hour-and-a-half, courtesy of writer John Elder (Anthony Hinds) and director Peter Sasdy. The film improves significantly on its predecessors in terms of plotting. *HORROR OF DRACULA* was a tour-de-force, no doubt about that, but it was only an encapsulation of Stoker's novel. *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* covers new ground with its blend of Satanism, vampirism, and eroticism, and pushes against the cinematic borders of previous vampiric menaces, breaking a taboo here and there along the way.

The pursuit of un-Godly values by a purportedly God-fearing society is the film's central theme, which leads indirectly to Dracula's resurrection. When the vampire invades the sanctity of the home to shatter the masquerades of purportedly moralistic individuals, leaving them naked and defenseless (and dead!) as a result of their quest for forbidden pleasures, he does it in the cruelest



Amidst the post-apocalyptic wasteland, Mad Max learns to live again in *THE ROAD WARRIOR*.

possible fashion—using the innocent to terrorize the wicked, and thereby transposing good and evil.

The youngsters who become pawns in Dracula's bid for vengeance are victims of Victorian repression, and as such are curiously one-dimensional until Dracula awakens their lust for perverse thrills and power. Killing becomes fun; even better when it's your own flesh and blood. When Lucy stakes her father, her fangs flashing like an evil beacon, she glances at Dracula as if sharing a private joke. Sasdy constantly reminds us of the beauty of the forbidden by juxtaposing horror (patricide) with joy (Alice's smiling face after she wallops her father with a shovel). We can't help but feel a chill, even more so today when our own children are dropping like flies at the hands of their hysterically laughing peers.

Truly, victimization is what this film is about. Weller (Roy Kinnear), a curio dealer who rescues the vampire's remains from oblivion, is robbed in the film's opening moments; Lord Courtley (Ralph Bates) is disowned by his father; Alice Hargood (Linda Hayden) becomes the victim of her father's ever-escalating outrages (both mental and physical, which culminate in near-rape); Mrs. Hargood (Gwen Watford) is a victim of her husband's petty abuse; Felix (Russell Hunter) is victimized by Courtley, who in turn is beaten and killed by Hargood (Geoffrey Keen), Secker (John Carson) and Paxton (Peter Sallis)...and we haven't even gotten to Dracula yet!

Footage of the Count is minimal, but events in the film are either directly or indirectly connected with his resurrection, sustenance, plan, methods, and ultimately his destruction. Unfortunately—

and this is the worst thing about the picture—Christopher Lee's scenes are less effective than those in *HORROR OF DRACULA* and *DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE*. New stunts—such as having Dracula's eyes flash red as he drinks Lucy's blood—are wickedly perverse (supposedly this was Lee's own idea), but the fierceness of the earlier films is replaced by a slow and methodical deliberation that makes the character seem more aloof than ever.

The film is technically superb. Arthur Grant's photography and Scott MacGregor's sets are breathtaking. The special effects, especially during Dracula's resurrection, are exciting and original. The traditional Hammer Dracula theme music by James Bernard is back, along with wholly original interludes that surpass anything previously composed for the series, making this the best Dracula score ever. (Indeed, it's Bernard's personal favorite.) The direction, by Hungarian newcomer Peter Sasdy, is as solid as Terence Fisher's ever was, with intense, angled closeups of Dracula and, in the uncut version, exotic, subjective moment-of-death shots as the victims' dying gaze falls on the silhouetted figure of Dracula. (It's a mystery why U.S. distributor Warner Bros. removed these shots, which certainly couldn't have made the difference between a PG and an R rating.)

This is so much more than a mere reprise of the first film's parable of good versus evil. It's a comment on a way of life that did more emotional damage to more people than at any time except our own, and a grim reminder that violence invariably begets violence.

Randy Palmer

TERMINATOR 2

When *T2* was released, considerable attention was paid to its budget. Fascinated by the morphing technology, "explosion counters" were concerned that the quality and quantity of special effects adequately reflected the hefty price tag. Judged on that basis, the movie's success depended upon the effects-per-dollar ratio. For a genre often plagued by such terms as "low-budget" and "B-movie"—misguided attempts to evaluate films based on notions of cost and content—it is perhaps ironic that budget giants such as *T2* present the same critical paralysis. While budgets and special effects do play a role, it takes more than morphing and explosions to tell a good story.

T2 does have depth beneath its effects-laden umbrella, fulfilling the obligation of sequels to explore new ground with old characters. Granted, its structure plays familiar, re-utilizing the robot vs. protector formula. But it also introduces us to a new Sarah Connor, one who is resigned to sacrifice her life in a war for the future. Hardened and jaded, she bears the weight of the film's theme, specifically humanity's accountability for its technology. Terminators rule the future because humanity loses control. Sarah's (and humanity's) salvation lies in the redemption of that technology, as represented by the humanization of Arnold's Terminator. In teaching it the value of human life, the future is literally and metaphorically saved. By exploring such a theme, *T2* proves its worth beyond simple cost-effective comparisons to the modestly budgeted original.

Matthew F. Saunders

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

Possibly the most overrated horror film of all time, *THE*

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE is not without its virtues—although perhaps *virtue* (emphasis on the singular) would be more accurate, since there is only one: unrelenting intensity. The film's ability to sustain this sense of impending, inevitable dread for feature length is truly amazing. It is also, ultimately, boring, like a blistering heavy metal guitar solo that goes on for not one, not five, not even ten minutes, but one and a half hours. At first, the virtuosity is impressive, but soon you realize that you've experienced everything the artist has to offer, and the only thing you're going to get is more of the same.

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2 is basically a camp reprise of the first film, which turned fans off, but at least there is some variety to the tone. Making Dennis Hopper's character (who would be the hero in most scenarios) into a crackpot as crazy as the Chainsaw family is a nice touch. And the female lead is allowed to do something more than scream throughout the whole movie. In fact, only toward the end, when the Grandpa sequences from the original are virtually recreated, does the film begin descending to the monotonous level of the first. Still, if you can get over your expectations of what you think this film should or could have been, you will find an exercise in cinematic outrageousness that is quite entertaining in its own right.

Steve Blodrowski

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE

As sequels go, this is one of the more inventive. Excluding all that came after *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* was the wisest decision for Craven to make. By having the principles, including himself, act as puppets to the mythology of public perception, the fourth wall is kicked asunder. We, as the voyeuristic groupies we are, see just what the hell we've been idolizing all these years and how, as a fanatic terrorizes Heather Langenkamp and Craven himself is overtaken by the nightmare he created, such hero worship can disrupt an artist's life. But the narrative premise, an all-encompassing evil that arises throughout the ages to prey on those who don't keep the stories alive, is clever and suspenseful. The fictional and nonfictional narrative lines, as the real life counterparts of our fictional heroes come to grips with what they have wrought, never collide but flow smoothly together as only a master storyteller can manage.

Fred C. Szepin

character from WARLOCK, the sequel totally ignored the plot of its popular predecessor.

More recently Charles Band hid the fact that INVISIBLE: THE CHRONICLES OF BENJAMIN KNIGHT was a follow-up to MANDROID, presumably due to the negative response that film earned from video store owners and viewers. The trend continues in '95: the simultaneously-filmed follow-up to CYBORG COP is being released as CYBORG SOLDIER, and what was filmed as SCANNER COP 2 will be released as SCANNERS: THE SHOWDOWN. Though this might give encouragement that the sequel craze is in decline, it should be noted that, even as this is being written, production is underway in South Africa on, CYBORG COP 3.

But the ultimate example of hiding a sequel's origin would have to be Universal's decision to release Sam Raimi's second follow-up to THE EVIL DEAD as ARMY OF DARKNESS, denying it even an EVIL DEAD 3 subtitle. The series claims another distinction within the parameters of this article, being one of the few whose entries fall into different sequel categories. The second film, EVIL DEAD 2, belongs in the Virtual Remake category, since it covers much of the same territory as the first film.

Don Coscarelli's recent DTV follow-up to his popular PHANTASM films continues characters and story points from its predecessors, but Coscarelli says, "I've got mixed feelings about sequels. I didn't conceive PHANTASM as a trilogy, but I've been very happy to get the chance to continue the story. On the other hand, BEASTMASTER 2 [the follow-up to his 1982 film], which I was not involved with, isn't going to satisfy anybody. About all it's done is let people realize that my complaints about the producer of the first one were right. All you have to do is see how bad the sequel he directed is."

Only Jim Wynorski exceeds Jeff Burr in the volume of sequels directed, and not even Wynorski can surpass the dubious distinction Burr says

"The same movie with just a change of location and cast," is Fred Olen Ray's description of most sequels. "If a sequel has to be done, do something new."



CHILDREN OF THE CORN III transports the horrible children from the first two films into an urban setting, but there's no reason to expect any improvement.

earned his self-described "Captain Sequel" appellation. "I did STEPFATHER 2, TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III, and PUPPETMASTERS 4 & 5 in that order. I'm pretty sure I'm the only director to have actually done sequels in numerical order that were not part of the same series," says Burr, adding with a laugh, "If I just could have gotten HALLOWEEN 6!"

Though Burr's involvement with so many series seems tacit approval of the sequel craze, the director does not count these efforts among his best work and even refuses to label them "A Jeff Burr Film"—this despite how common that appellation is with most other filmmakers. "I started that with LEATHERFACE: TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III," explains Burr, referring to a dispute with the production company. "New Line hadn't bothered to tell me they'd reshot the ending—you know, Ken Foree's idiotic return from the dead—and totally castrated the rest of the film with a new edit. At a preview screening, I wound up so pissed that I ended up in a screaming match with them, shouting, 'I want my

name off the fucking movie.' They weren't about to do that. They already had a thousand prints ready to go with my name on them. Ever since then, I always give a film my best effort, but it's only "A Jeff Burr Film" if I helped conceive it and had final edit."

While Burr's recent PUMPKINHEAD II: BLOOD WINGS would seem to be starting his numerical cycle again, he insists that's not the case. "I believe in that 'never say never' axiom, but I'd be perfectly happy to never do another sequel," claims Burr. "Sequels are what's being made right now, so they're alright as a chance to learn one's craft and get a few credits under your belt, but they're really films made for all the wrong reasons. You have two strikes against you right at the start of a sequel. They're generally made for a fraction of the cost and schedule of the original, making a comparable job pretty tough, and any surprise element is gone. Your audience knows the concept, so a sequel can never be a neat little 'sleeper.' It can never meet fan expectations because it will always be judged against the original, never on its own mer-

its. It's hard enough to just make a movie, without having the added weight on your shoulders that comes with doing a sequel."

Few things are as indicative of how far the cancer of the sequel plague has run than recent news item explaining why THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE, based on Alex Bennett's play *The Madness of King George III*, was retitled to eliminate the Roman numeral. It seems the producers were concerned that audiences would pass on the film because they had already missed THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE I and II.

Another distressing trend is to make sequels to accepted classics. While the death of Anthony Perkins may have cost us a fine actor, at least it brought an end to the PSYCHO sequels, for the moment anyway. However, the rest of Hitchcock's oeuvre still isn't safe. 1994 saw the abysmal BIRDS II: LAND'S END being dropped on our viewing window like so much excrement from the skies.

"We're are drowning in a sequel sea right now, and it will take someone outside the system to stop that tide, because it's the system itself that's flooding us," offers Jeff Burr when questioned about the current state of sequel mania. While the trend may be slowing at the moment, this summer's DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE and UNDER SIEGE II may well make it all the rage again. On the DTV front, we can look forward to a full slate: a pair of MCA/Universal sequels to DARKMAN; a follow-up to Albert Pyun's incomprehensible but action-packed cyber-punk tale, NEMESIS, (with a third announced); the completed HELLRAISER IV, RETURN OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, and HALLOWEEN VI, as well as a promised BEYOND RE-ANIMATOR, a threatened CREEPSHOW III, and many others. So, as we line up at local theaters or traipse to nearby video emporiums to partake in the latest sequel offering, try to remember that aged homily, 'Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice shame on me.' □

BATMAN

FOREVER

by Steve Biodrowski

New director, new sidekick, new stars—it's a holy new Bat-game.

Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary," says Batman in "Dr. Hugo Strange and the Mutant Monsters" (*Batman* #1, 1940). The caped crusader then proceeds, from the relative safety of the Bat-plane, to machine gun some human thugs and lasso a humanoid monster by the neck, hoisting him in the air and strangling him to death. "He's probably better off this way," is the only sympathy the Dark Knight expresses for this unfortunate victim of Dr. Strange's experiments. There is no thought of returning him to the asylum from which he was kidnapped; death is his only cure—and Batman is only too willing to administer it.

So it was with at least a hint of amusement that one noted an *L.A. Weekly* reviewer's objection (on the grounds of being a "comic book purist") to Batman's actually killing villains in *BATMAN RETURNS*. It was with even greater amusement that one reacted when, in *BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM*, the animated feature widely regarded as more faithful to the comic book, Commissioner Gordon insists, "The Batman doesn't kill." And one could be rolling in the aisles by the time Lee & Janet Scott Batchler's script for *BATMAN III* had Bruce Wayne insisting to Dick Grayson, "NO KILLING! We're not the jury, or the executioner."

Fortunately, that last little exchange doesn't survive in Akiva



The film features several dual personalities, not only Batman & Robin but two schizo villains, the Riddler & Two-Face (Jim Carrey and Tommy Lee Jones).

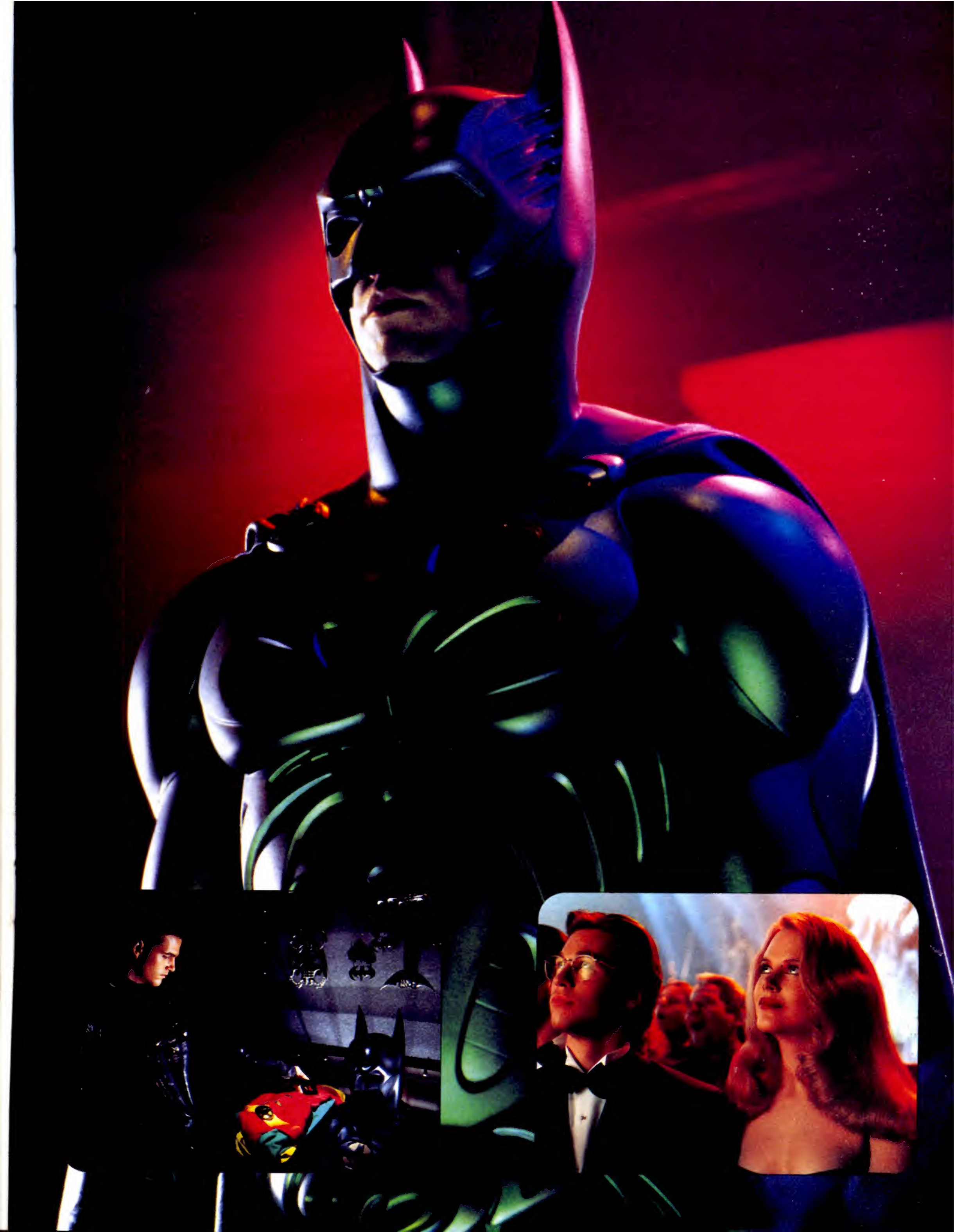
Goldsman's revised drafts for *BATMAN FOREVER*. However, there is no doubt that we will be seeing a lighter version of the Dark Knight, as Warner Bros appeases not only the family audience but, more importantly, their merchandising partners, who don't necessarily want their products associated with characters who crack whips and spew bile.

The kinder, gentler *BATMAN FOREVER* opens June 16. Tim Burton and Peter MacGregor-Scott produced, with Benjamin Melniker and Michael E. Uslan serving as executive producers. Joel Schumacher directed a new ensemble cast made up of Val Kilmer as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Tommy Lee Jones as Harvey Dent/Two-Face, Jim Carrey as Edward Nygma/The Riddler, Chris O'

Donnell as Dick Grayson/Robin the Boy Wonder, and Nicole Kidman as Dr. Chase Meridian. Returning are Michael Gough as Alfred and Pat Hingle as Commissioner Gordon. Bob Ringwood again designed the costumes, and the special effects were supervised by Academy Award-winner John Dykstra (*STAR WARS*).

So, is this Batman going to be a do-goody liberal who always captures his man alive?

Val Kilmer is the new Dark Knight, in a sleeker Batsuit. The dual nature of the character is explored by having Bruce Wayne involved with a psychologist (Nicole Kidman, inset right) who specializes in split personalities. Inset left: Dick Grayson (Chris O'Donnell) uses the "Flying Graysons" circus outfit of his murdered family for his Robin costume—until Batman observes sarcastically, "Nice camouflage in a paint factory."





Robin's new costume resembles the Batsuit. "Why should he be in screaming red and yellow next to a guy who's camouflaged in black?" asks Schumacher.

According to Joel Schumacher, when villains "try to kill Batman, he does sometimes get out of their way so that they can kill themselves. You won't see him actively murder anyone in this. I don't think it's necessary. I also know that a lot of young people are fans of Batman, and I think that, along with the fun and games, there has to be a little bit of responsibility."

Writer Akiva Goldsman adds, "We have this ongoing debate: Does Batman ever kill anybody in this movie? No. But I didn't look at the other two films in terms of whether

or not he actually kills people. Conventional wisdom said he didn't, that he just lets people die. That's subject to interpretation, whether some bad guys end up dead at their own hands. But Batman doesn't come and snap any necks."

This may sound like splitting hairs, but it's symptomatic of the problems encountered when attempting to adapt a character with a long history. "People have fidelity to different versions of Batman," Goldsman opines. "There have been [versions] who make it a rule not to kill, and there have been [versions] who are thoroughly dark vigilantes. And everybody thinks that their Bat-

man is the real Batman. There are people who think the true Batman is the one on TV. That happens not to be the Batman I think of as the real Batman, although the show was fun. I guess the true Batman is Bob Kane's, but that Batman is different from the one of today. Batman came into his own again with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and then again when Tim Burton made *BATMAN*. I think the Batman of the first two movies is as defining an incarnation as any that came before. That's what's always interesting about working with a popular myth: everybody has pride of ownership. You want to be respectful of that, but also give them something that they don't quite expect."

The idea that Batman has gone through different incarnations was the jumping off point for Schumacher to take the character in a new direction. "The great thing about Batman is that since 1939 there have been so many interpretations of the theme—everything from Dracula to cyborgs to fantasy," says the director. "I approached it that way: the artists and storytellers always pay homage to the past but create their own comic book. That's what I tried to do."

Adds Goldman, "Joel really had some clear ideas about how to let Batman live again and differently. Our attempt is to revisit the myth in a way that is again different and yet familiar. In that sense, you want to look at what makes Batman behave the way he behaves. I think we

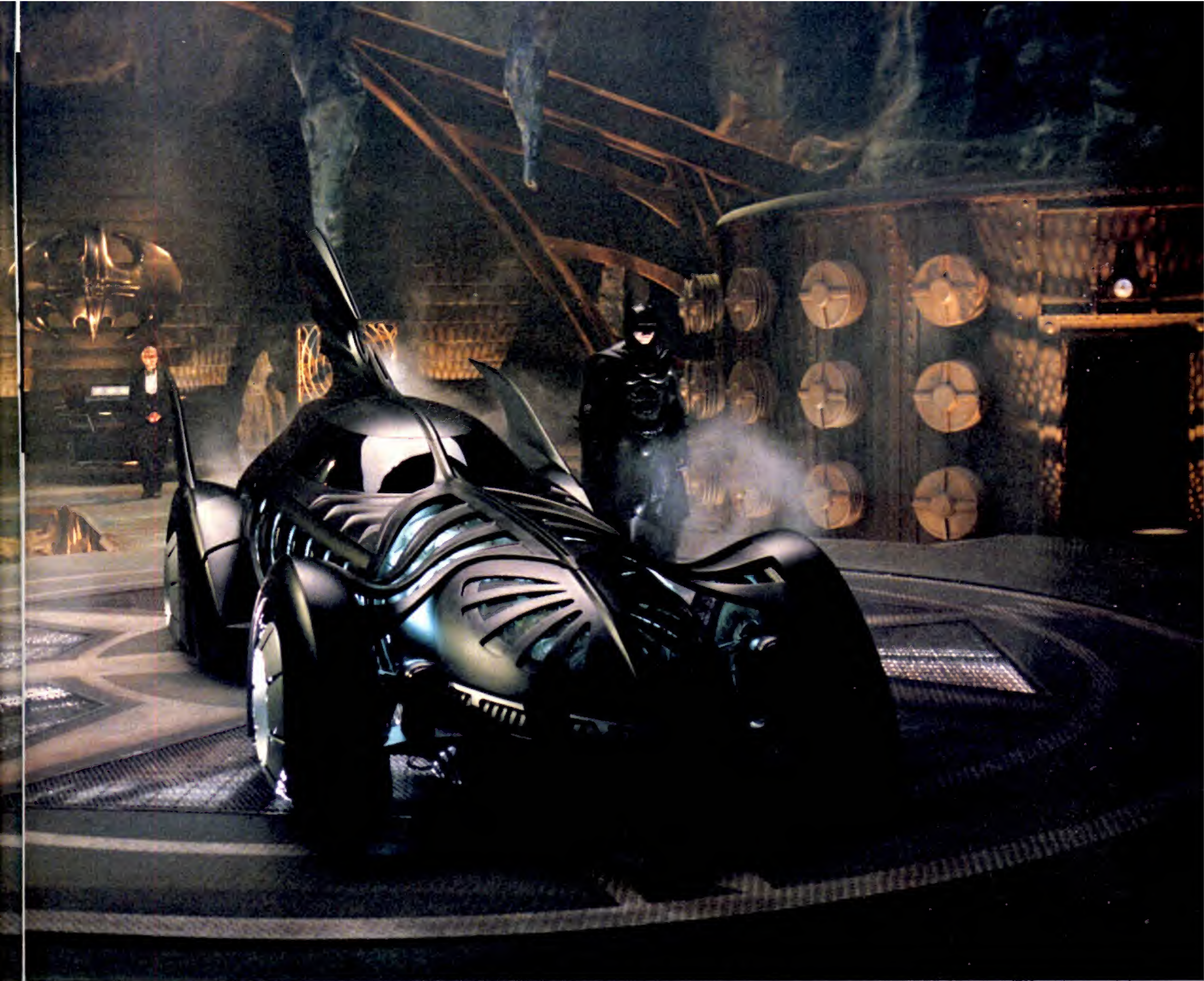


Two-Face's double personality reveals itself in every aspect of his life, including girlfriends Leather (Debi Mazar) and Lace (Drew Barrymore).



were pretty strenuous in terms of trying to understand and re-examine the motivations for putting on that cape and cowl."

Schumacher's effort at re-inventing the character was aided by recasting the lead role. "I thought I was making the movie with Michael Keaton for quite a long time," he recounts. "He had a lot of unresolved issues about the last two movies, which had nothing to do with me. So, I did not know I was going to have a new Bruce Wayne/Batman, but when I saw *TOMBSTONE*, I did fantasize about Val being in the role, though I didn't think that was a possibility. Then a few months after that, Bob Da-



The Batcave (above) goes up in flames (right) after the Riddler manages to discover its whereabouts.

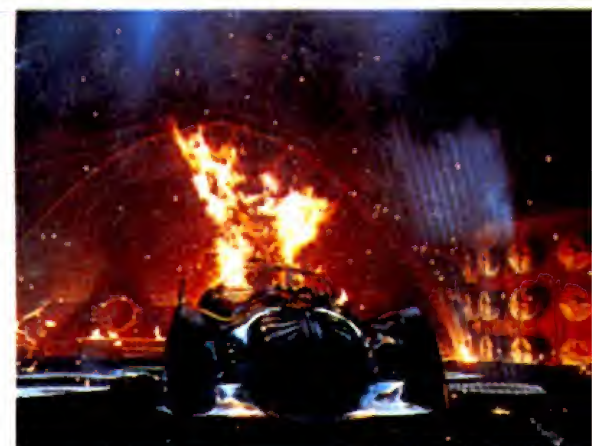
ley of Warners asked if I'd ever considered anybody else besides Michael. So I called Val's agent, and Val was in Africa, doing research on a script he was writing about a man who spent time with primitive tribes in Africa. It took three days, and—believe it or not—when they finally found him, he was in a bat cave. Val and I had met on previous movies; and, without seeing a script, without talking to me, he said yes."

Schumacher felt "totally" liberated from the previous films by the new casting. "Then we were in a new comic book," he explains. "Of course, when you have a 34-year-old Batman/Bruce Wayne with Val, it's a different story."

Ironically, the new Batman, like Michael Keaton in NIGHT SHIFT, had first gained attention in a comedy, TOP SECRET. Schumacher is fond of pointing out that the term for the film's source material (at least before "graphic novel" came in vogue) is "comic book," not "tragic book," which he offers as a justification for exploiting the comedic abilities of his star. "Val has a great sense of humor," he points out. "We've tried to introduce it into his Bruce Wayne and his Batman, but one of the reasons I chose Val is because he is very deep and introspective and intense, and I think you have to believe that. Even though he has a sense of humor, there's

always an edge underneath. He's not Rodney Dangerfield!"

Is the humor, then, not an attempt to completely lighten up the Dark Knight? "I hope not! I think the Dark Knight is aptly named and will always be a dark character," says Goldman. However, he adds, "Sometimes very serious situations are also very funny. The thing about Gotham City that always has to be remembered is that everybody is really, *really* smart. It's a world where, if you have a psychological dysfunction, you create phenomenal machinery in order to work through your difficulty: rather than go to therapy, you build a batmobile and a suit that gives you virtually superhuman pow-



ers, and you have a lifelong catharsis. Very smart people I think are also very witty. So this movie has a lot of wit, but the issues themselves we take very seriously. At the same time this movie doesn't edge into horror, so it won't be as dark as some moments in BATMAN RETURNS. But I'm a tremendous fan of BATMAN 1."

That last statement will



Comic book primary colors predominate the new film's look, as when the Batmobile races down Wall Street (above, standing in for Gotham) or Batman crashes a party (right), one example of the new Bat's improved gracefulness.

hardly reassure those who found **BATMAN** an uncharacteristically impersonal film from one of Cinemagination's most idiosyncratic talents. Fans can at least rest easy knowing that **BATMAN FOREVER** is not an attempt to turn the Caped Crusader into a squeaky clean superhero. "Janet Kahn, who runs DC Comics, says the world's divided between Superman fans and Batman fans," notes Schumacher. "Of course, that was very true of me, because as a child I was never a Superman fan; I was always a Batman fan. When you are a Batman fan, there's a very haunting part to it, because he is a real man, as opposed to a superhero. His parents were shot in front of him, and he has lived alone, with his trusty butler, and does don this bat-suit and wreak vengeance and vigilantism on Gotham City. It's only appropriate that at a certain point someone might turn around and say, 'Why did I become Batman? What is it that I'm doing exactly? And am I doing this because I want to or because I have no choice?' I think that makes an interesting Batman story."

According to Schumacher, Warners Bros. was not specific about what direction they wanted that story to take when they offered him the franchise. "I wanted to bring in some of the mythic elements of why he became Batman, and I wanted to do a story about dual personalities," he says. "Besides Bruce Wayne having two identities, so do the villains. Two-Face is a good example, and the Riddler is also Edward Nygma, a nerdy inventor." On the basis of a script called **SMOKE AND MIRRORS**, Schumacher recommended the writing team of Lee Batchler and Janet Scott Batchler to Burton. "We met with them and talked for about an hour," recalls Schumacher. "A week later, Janet and Lee pitched the story. They were under contract to do another film, and they snuck away to do this draft for us. Then they had to go

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BATMAN

FOREVER THE DARK KNIGHT

A look at the sinister superhero's unending appeal.

By Joe Desris

With Batman's worldwide popularity today, it may be difficult to believe there was a time when he had a low profile, but the Dark Knight took about 25 years to reach icon status. This is not to say that Batman did not get off to a good start. After only eight appearances, he became the mainstay on covers of *Detective Comics*, then earned his own title in 1940, had his own newspaper strip in 1943, and surfaced on movie screens with two 15-chapter serials, in 1943 and 1949.

A major portion of Batman's appeal stems from the fact that he is a regular guy. Maybe an unusually well-disciplined regular guy, he nevertheless remains earth-bound like the rest of us, even if he is a millionaire socialite. Batman is not interplanetary, nor does he possess traditional superpowers, yet vast knowledge, resources, and finely tuned skills make him a highly determined and virtually unconquerable opponent.

It is generally acknowledged that cartoonist Bob Kane developed the character, although the Dark Knight that first appeared in print ("The Case of the Chemical Syndicate," in *Detective Comics* #27, May 1939) was actually a collaborative effort between Kane and Bill Finger, who wrote Batman's first two adventures and later chronicled some of the most memorable villains, plots, and sets.

The comic books chronicle the adventures of Bruce Wayne, who as a boy experienced the trauma of seeing his parents murdered on a dark



Batman has appeared in many forms. Until the Warner Bros films, the most popular version with mainstream audiences was the campy TV desecration.

city street. The orphaned Wayne developed his detective skills over a 15-year period, until a bat flew into his study one evening—the omen he needed to adopt his crime-fighting persona. Combining a strong sense of honesty and justice, the Masked Manhunter became an obsessed, relentless, and potentially lethal fighting machine (although later interpretations assumed a personal code against killing). An unequalled tactician and strategist, he is also expert at disguises and a master of nearly all forms of physical combat, with a variety of high-tech equipment and weaponry at his disposal.

Batman fought crime solo for 11 adventures before Robin was introduced. Like Wayne, Dick Grayson suffered the loss of his parents, who were mur-

dered by gangsters. Grayson became Robin the Boy Wonder and, alongside Batman, brought his parents' assailants to justice. Although Bruce Wayne's bachelor status made adoption impossible, Grayson became his legal ward. Significantly, Robin was the comics' first super-hero boy sidekick, soon to be followed by Bucky, Toro, Sandy, and other imitators.

While Bruce Wayne has enjoyed love interests such as Vicki Vale, Batman has had several as well, including Poison Ivy. But none have had the particular qualities of Catwoman. Like the Joker, the Feline Fury appeared in *Batman* #1, although her disguise was much different from her current outfit (she wore a large cat's head, for example). She soon developed other feline imagery

that made her one of Batman's most memorable and devious foes. Batman and Catwoman also developed a simultaneous repulsion and attraction for each other, each wishing their opponent would change their ways and join the other.

Although Batman and Robin occasionally battled the Axis during World War II, the Gotham Guardians generally remained crime-fighting detectives. This remained true until the latter half of the 1950s when they embarked upon a curious career, which often included battling aliens and other fanciful adventures. It was common to see Batman during the day, and this quickly became the era of the Dynamic Duo rather than the Dark Knight Detective. Comic and semi-comic characters such as Bat-Mite and Bat-Hound were also introduced; though enjoyable, such stories transported the characters even further from their film noir roots, where

According to creator Bob Kane, the mystique of Batman's split personality has sustained interest.





Despite the campy TV show, the Dark Knight remained dark in the pages of Detective Comics.

shadowy, nocturnal figures lurked in dim, deserted alleyways of mysterious, rain-slicked Gotham streets.

A six-year period of exponential growth in popularity began in 1963. A change of staff on the comics precipitated a new approach to the character, and a "new look" was introduced in *Detective Comics* #327, part of which included a yellow ellipse behind Batman's chest emblem, a new Batmobile, and a new way to get to the Batcave (an elevator). The "new look" also changed the style of Batman's adventures. Once again, he was a detective operating at night, solving crimes and battling some of his most infamous foes.

Batman was developed for television in 1965, leading to the generally unanticipated overnight nationwide success. The 1966-68 TV series quickly made Batman a pop culture

icon as well as an established part of American folklore. As a media sensation, Batman not only was covered by newspapers, magazines, and TV; he also had a feature film, syndicated newspaper strip, and million-dollar merchandising. A plethora of licensed Batman collectibles descended on the public, including model kits, Halloween costumes, bubble gum cards, pencils, lunch boxes, and coloring books.

The camp of the TV show had little effect on the comics. The ubiquitous and ridiculous bat-gizmos, the labeling of practically every knob and spec of dirt in the Batcave, and the comedic dialog remained confined to the tube. The televised satire was not well received by all fans of the Masked Manhunter, and this backlash began to manifest itself late in 1967 when Neal Adams began illustrating his version: a creature of the night. Batman's 1960s comic book adventures were unlike

the somber 1970s version or the gritty Dark Knight motif of the 1980s.

Batman first appeared in a Saturday morning animated series for CBS in *The Batman/Superman Hour* on September 14, 1968. In 1969, freshman Dick Grayson left for college, splitting the Batman and Robin partnership...at least until Christmas and summer vacations. As he matured, Grayson decided that not only did he no longer fit the image of a Boy Wonder, but his goals and attitudes had become markedly different from a more obsessed Dark Knight. As Grayson entered Hudson University, the locale of Robin's adventures also changed, and Grayson subsequently became the super-hero Nightwing. Junior high school student Jason Todd then took over the role of Robin in *Detective Comics* #526.

A true turning point for Batman came in 1986, when Frank Miller's acclaimed *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* was published. A critical and commercial success, Miller's four-part graphic novel received unanticipated worldwide press coverage. Set in a depressingly bleak near-future, the series established a fashionably darker tone for Batman that remains in vogue today, in all media. As *BATMAN FOREVER* scribe Akiva Goldsman explains, *The Dark Knight Returns* not only reinvented Batman; it reinvented comics. That was the first time to my knowledge that we were given permission to expect psychological realism and pathos in a mainstream comic. Gone were the days of simple all good, all evil. Comic books had to catch up with the realities of living in the world. They had certainly started in the '60s with Neal Adams' *Green Arrow* and *Green Lantern* stuff. But Frank Miller took a character whom everybody knew and redid it in a way that made everybody stop and look."

Miller's work was the start of a Batman renaissance, which also includes *Batman: The Animated Series*, a new comic book entitled *Batman Adventures*, and the phenomenally popular films *BATMAN*

(1989) and *BATMAN RETURNS* (1992). With the current *BATMAN FOREVER*, the Caped Crusader is once again a master of all media, appearing in theaters, on laser discs, computer games, on-line services, and television, yet still firmly established in his original form, the comic book.

If anyone deserves the final word on the continuing legend of the Dark Knight, it's Bob Kane who watched his Caped Crusader battle a myriad of baddies in hundreds of incarnations for over 50 years. When asked to pinpoint the key to Batman's longevity, Kane says, "Everyone has a good side and a bad side, but people have always been fascinated by the dark side of their human character, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It's a prevailing concept that's been around forever. Not that Batman is a bad guy, but he lives in a world that's dark and mysterious, and it's the mystique of it all—the batcave, his costume, the gimmicks, the villains—that's sustained it for so many decades. Batman is a part of Americana, like Babe Ruth or Mickey Mouse," Kane concludes. "He's like the United States flag: he'll always be here, and I don't think he'll ever die, frankly." □

Bob Kane interview by Taylor White. Akiva Goldsman interview by Steve Biodrowski.

Below: the comics' version of Two-Face, seen characteristically using his coin to decide his victims' fate.





Billy Dee Williams as District Attorney Harvey Dent in *BATMAN*.

back to their obligation, so they could not continue on the project. I hired Akiva Goldsman, who had worked on *THE CLIENT* with me, adapting John Grisham's book. Akiva worked with the actors and has done a lot of the rewrites, but Janet and Lee's initial story structure never changed."

Although part of his job was tailoring dialogue for the actors, Goldsman doesn't consider the transition from Keaton to Kilmer a major impetus for character revision. "Certainly in the later stages, one is always attentive to the actor playing the part," explains the writer. "But the idea for this Batman was the same: the notion of revisiting the past in a new way existed when it was Michael and carried over to when it was Val."

Revisiting the past takes the form of flashbacks to a young Bruce Wayne stumbling upon the batcave beneath Wayne manner—an important part of the inspiration that caused him to choose his strange identity when he turned vigilante. It is perhaps symptomatic of Tim Burton's disinterest in the title character that, after two films, we know why the Joker is the Joker, why the Penguin is a Penguin, and why Catwoman is a cat, while we still have no idea why Batman is a bat. "The comic books are very revisionist in an interesting way," says Goldsman of the tendency to replay this seminal incident. The film's revision of origin story "tries to take a lot of the more interesting psychological

NEW FACE FOR TWO-FACE

"I didn't consider Billy Dee Williams, because I see him as a hero, like Clark Gable. I had just worked with Tommy Lee Jones on *THE CLIENT* and thought he would be great."

elements that might make up a young boy who witnesses the death of his parents and expresses them in a way that's hyperbolic in the way the comic books are hyperbolic.

"Comics now really do speak to actual feelings, but they do so in a way different from straight drama," Goldsman continues. "The added element lets you move off the head-on facing of something tragic. There are some tragic things in this movie, such as the story of Robin—this is a boy who loses his parents. If you were to play that in a straight drama, it would be devastating; it would have to be the whole movie. Because we're in a more hyperbolic world where time and experience seem to have slightly different effects on people, you can have a tremendous weight to it and then expect some kind of resolution—not total healing but some kind of character resolution—in a way that you couldn't in a straight drama."

As a way of focusing on the dilemma of Bruce Wayne's personality conflict, the film introduces a new love interest in the form of Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), a criminal psychologist specializing in dual personality disorders. "It's

my comic book and my Gotham City, so that's what criminal psychologists look like!" laughs Schumacher. "If you needed a criminal psychologist, you'd rather have Nicole Kidman than Dr. Ruth any day."

The character, who is attracted more to the Dark Knight than the millionaire socialite, provided a "basis to play with Bruce Wayne struggling with his two identities," according to Schumacher. But an even more important element was the introduction of Dick Grayson. "Here's a young man who's lost his family and wants vengeance," the director points out, "which is an exact mirror of Bruce Wayne—who, like most of us, wants better things for younger people than he has himself. We don't always wish the struggle and pain on others that we chose to have in our own lives. Even though there are many facets to the film, that's its core."

As in the previous films, the crowded scenario focuses on the origin of a new villain, in this case Wayne Enterprises employee Edward Nygma, whose brain-enhancing invention turns him into The Riddler. With the introduction of a new

For the third *BATMAN* film, Warner Bros selected director Joel Schumacher to replace Tim Burton as custodian of the "corporation's largest asset."



Tommy Lee Jones as the criminal Two-Face in *BATMAN FOREVER*.

love interest and Robin, there was little room for the transformation of District Attorney Harvey Dent into the criminal Two-Face, now seen only briefly as a television news clip recounting events that took place before the film's beginning. "We're doing the origin of Batman; we're doing the origin of Dick Grayson; we're doing the origin of the Riddler. It's enough!" says Schumacher. "We explain the origin of Harvey/Two-Face, but one of the interesting things about *Batman* comics is that the villains get sent to Arkham Asylum, then break out and make trouble again. So the movie starts with Two-Face escaping after being put in Arkham Asylum for two years by Batman, who was one of his best friends."

Of course, one of the criticisms of *BATMAN RETURNS* was that having two villains left scant screen time for the Caped Crusader. "It had become tradition in *BATMAN* films to service a wide variety of characters," Goldsman observes. "In order to service a bunch of characters you have to make decisions about what you see versus what you hear. It seemed more interesting to see the Riddler's story, which drives the actual plot, because he is an unknown identity. There is no secret to Two-Face's identity; everyone knows he was a prosecuting attorney who holds Batman culpable for the incident that scarred him. In order to perpetuate the mystery we had to do the Riddler, so the audience

would know who he was but Batman wouldn't."

The irony of not dramatizing Harvey Dent's transformation into Two-Face is that the last time we saw the character, he was black! Schumacher opted not to use Billy Dee Williams, who had played the character in *BATMAN*. "I always wanted Tommy Lee Jones," explains the director. "I didn't consider Billy Dee Williams for the role, because I think that Billy Dee Williams is a hero. I always see him like Clark Gable. I had just finished working with Tommy Lee Jones on *THE CLIENT*, and I thought he would be a great Harvey/Two-Face."

For all the script's attempts at reinventing the series, the filmmakers have, apparently without realizing it, remade the second film. Not only does Batman face a pair of villains; he meets a character (Catwoman previously, Robin this time) who seems to be a replica of himself—a person who has undergone a trauma and tried to carry out a plan of vengeance by taking on a masked persona. Even the romance with Dr. Meridian consciously echoes Selina Kyle/Catwoman ("Do I need skin-tight leather and a whip?" purrs Nicole Kidman to Batman in the coming attractions trailer). At least, the script manages to justify the awkward title: after undergoing a crisis of doubt over whether or not he should continue with his divided selves, Wayne and Batman supposedly merge into a more unified personality, and the character becomes reconciled to remaining Batman



DARK KNIGHT PSYCHOLOGY
“Dr. Meridian is a criminologist who studies dual personalities. But it’s my comic book, so she can look like Nicole Kidman—you’d rather have her than Dr. Ruth any day!”



In a bizarre love triangle, Wayne finds himself competing with his own alter ego, whose mystique turns out to be more appealing to Dr. Meridian.

for the rest of his life.

Whether or not we get a completely new Batman, we will see a completely new Batsuit, one which allows the Caped Crusader the agility sorely lacking in the previous films. "I think we were the benefactors of all the pioneering work done on the previous two films," Schumacher maintains. Costume designer "Bob Ringwood, who did the first two films, engineered those suits, and we got the benefit of all of that trial-and-error research. However awkward those suits were, they were the state-of-the-art at that time. If we had been starting from scratch, we would have been stuck with the same problem."

Improving the suit was part of the director's game plan of improving the action elements, the area that most revealed Tim Burton's and Michael Keaton's shortcomings. "The first thing I really wanted to do

was streamline the suit," he explains. "I wanted the Batsuit to be very flexible and much closer to the body, giving Val and whatever stuntmen had to wear it a lot of agility. Val really worked hard on his body and martial arts. In fact, the first martial arts sequence you see in the movie, a bank job that Harvey/Two-Face is trying to pull off, Val did almost if not all of everything you're seeing, the kicks and everything—in the suit and the cape, which weighs 40 or 50 pounds. The suit is much different. It's much more body conscious, and also Val has a great body—he's tall and well built, and it looks very beautiful on him."

"What you're always left with in all those great comic book drawings is how much you're *with* Batman," Schumacher continues. "You go up 30 stories with him; you go down 30 stories with him; he lands a certain way, right into frame. I tried to give the audience that sense of jumping off a 30-story building with him,

The two faces of Jim Carrey: geeky scientist Edward Nygma (left) and Batman nemesis the Riddler (right). Says Schumacher, "Jim's body had to be perfect to wear that leotard; he had to work out mercilessly, and he couldn't eat a thing."

crashing through ceilings, leaping tall buildings with the help of his batarang. We've tried to take you there with the camera. We had to have a very flexible suit to do that."

Another big costuming improvement is the outfit for Robin. As portrayed in this movie, the traditional, brightly colored garb is a vestige from the character's stint as one of the Flying Graysons' circus act. "Well, I had to do something to justify that stupid costume!" laughs Schumacher. "Why should this guy be in screaming red and yellow next to a guy who's camouflaged in black? I'm a modest man, but our biggest triumph is re-designing the Robin suit—the credit belongs to Bob Ringwood. We kept the colors, but we darkened them. I took the liberty of assuming that Alfred made the Batsuit, so why shouldn't he help Robin make a great suit? Also, not only do I not like the Robin suit aesthetically, but it makes no sense. It has no protection, whereas the Batsuit is a form of armor. So we did the Robin suit as a version of that, which would help with self-defense."

BATMAN FOREVER also represents the first time that the series has gotten out of the studio and onto location, in this case the streets of New York City. "I think that one of the problems when you build a city on a sound stage or a back lot is that there's a very short run for the Batmobile," explains Schumacher. "As big as a sound stage is, the minute you rev up a car, it will be at the other end in one second. The

continued on page 60



BATMAN FOREVER INTRODUCING ROBIN

*Chris O'Donnell is
the new Boy Wonder.*

After abandoned attempts in *BATMAN* and *BATMAN RETURNS*, Dick Grayson finally makes his entrance in *BATMAN FOREVER*, in the form of actor Chris O'Donnell (*SCENT OF A WOMAN*). That may hardly be cause for rejoicing among those who remember the character as a colorful but extraneous sidekick; however, the filmmakers intend to turn Robin into something more than just a Boy Wonder. "This is no 'Holy Cheesecake' Robin," director Joel Schumacher insists. "He's young and angry, and he has a story of his own."

"I grew up watching the TV show, and Charlie in *SCENT OF A WOMAN* was actually more like the Burt Ward character!" laughs O'Donnell. "Joel had this vision of Robin as a circus gypsy, someone who's grown up and been toughened on the road. He undergoes a traumatic experience—his parents die—but when he meets Bruce Wayne, this is the kind of person he resents."

"Joel was very specific about the look: leather jacket, and cut-off sleeves—he wanted him to be kind of sexy," O'Donnell adds, referring to Robin's new "Europunk" appearance, which includes an earring that baffled Batman-creator Bob Kane. "Apparently, he said that he didn't understand it. Don't worry—it's on the left ear!"

Akiva Goldsman elaborates on the approach to the characterization: "One of the very early ideas that Joel had, when we were working on *CLIENT*, was that he never wanted a 12-year-old wide-eyed acolyte, whom Batman willingly accepts. He wanted a tough kid who was a more accurate representation

of somebody who lives in a circus and who was psychologically and emotionally an island. We came up with the notion that, if Robin is an echo of Batman's past, then Batman is not going to say, 'Come on board.' In fact, there's nothing worse than seeing what happened to him happen to someone else, and the last thing he would want is for this kid to live a life as ridden with danger and obsession as his. So what you have then is a lovely conflict, which you always want at the beginning of great relationships."

That relationship was altered somewhat by the recasting of Batman. O'Donnell recalls, "Val really changed the dynamics. It became more a big brother-little brother relationship. Originally, it was written a little bit younger, and with Michael Keaton it would have been more a father-son type of thing."

The film offered an opportunity to share the screen with not only Kilmer but also Jim Carrey and Tommy Lee Jones, but the acting demands were more Bruce Lee than Lee Strasberg. In fact, O'Donnell had to take martial arts training in order to pull off numerous physical encounters, including a fight with world champion Don "the Dragon" Wilson. "I am by no means an expert, but I can fake it on camera," O'Donnell admits. "This is a good experience, but from an acting standpoint *SCENT OF A WOMAN* is much more satisfying. Action films are fun, but you spend the whole day doing little inserts and cuts, which can become monotonous. Doing a 10-minute dialogue scene each take with Al Pacino is like heaven."

Nevertheless, Goldsman con-



Above: O'Donnell in the new outfit, which abandons the bright colors of the Flying Graysons trapeze act (right). Clearly, this Robin is not the Boy Wonder introduced in *Detective Comics* #38 (below right), although he does serve a similar purpose: brightening the Dark Knight.

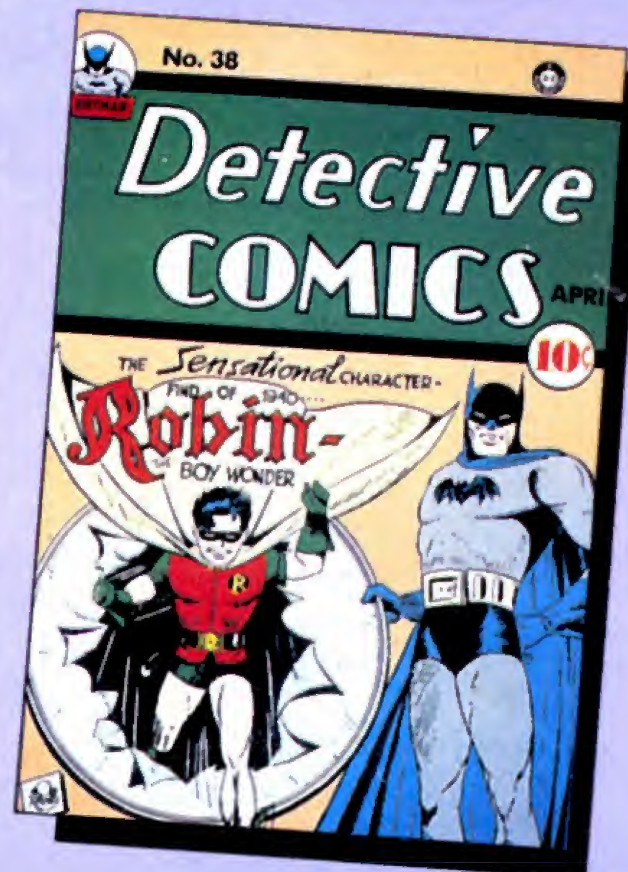


siders the newly devised dynamic between Batman and Robin "one of the best things about this movie. I think it's a terrifically interesting relationship, and Robin gets to be a superhero in a way that has only very recently been done in comics."

Does this mean the celluloid Robin could follow the example of his comic book counterpart and launch his own franchise, as Nightwing? "That would be cool as a concept," O'Donnell admits. "Obviously, there's a lot more to it, and Robin needs his own gadgets and mode of transportation."

In the meantime, O'Donnell is content to continue as a sidekick in the *BATMAN* films. "I'd definitely do another one," he says. "Someone was asking me where I would like the series to go. I just wish they'd bring Catwoman back; I think Robin and Catwoman could have a serious romance—at least I'd be willing to try!"

Steve Blodrowski





Tim Burton's second **BATMAN** film improves on the original by featuring the most interesting three way face-off since **THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY**. Above: Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer), the Penguin (Danny Devito), and Batman (Michael Keaton) are a trio of twisted characters who interact like the fragments of a split personality. Left: even the film's detractors found some redeeming value in the relationship between Batman and Catwoman, which is laced with S&M overtones. Right: in their physical confrontations, the agility of the high-kicking, whip-cracking Catwoman contrasted nicely with the more tank-like stolidity of Batman. Burton will probably never be a great action director, but at least this action illustrates characterization.



BATMAN



The second time's the charm for this superior sequel.

For Tim Burton, a movie about a tortured aristocrat who dresses up like a bat was probably no more *outré* than one about a young boy who wants to be Vincent Price. By nature, Burton's movies are driven by concepts that defy logic and celebrate the weird. But helming the mythos of Bob Kane's Batman in 1988 meant acquiring a mass of excess baggage that even the most seasoned visionary would have found hard to carry. With hordes of producers clamoring for creative input, a bloated budget worth *BEETLEJUICE* times three, and a script made semi-nebulous by multiple writers, it's a miracle the film came off at all.

Burton looks back on the experience with an air of abstraction. "Any director will tell you that your first big movie is always a bit shocking. You do everything you can to approach it like any other movie, but it's something you have to go through in order to fully understand how it feels and you can never fully prepare for it."

Pressed for an official *BATMAN* critique, Burton admits, "I actually couldn't pinpoint anything tangible. What's missing has more to do with feeling and energy than any specific scene. There might have been something about the scale of the film that got a little lumbering and flat, but I feel it had more to do with being a cultural phenomenon than actually being a good movie."

All reservations aside, with \$406 million in worldwide ticket sales and another \$150 million in video sales, it was only a matter of time before the inevitable sequel. Though financially tempting to say the least, the prospect didn't sit well with Burton. "I wasn't going to do it," he insists. "I guess everybody says that, but I really didn't want to do it. It honestly didn't have anything to do with money. I feel like everything I've done is flawed in a way, but I just didn't feel as close to the first *BATMAN*. It was more of a personal thing for me because I loved the material—the image of Batman and all of the characters—but when I sat back and thought about it, there just wasn't that same closeness, even though there are parts that I like very much.

"One of the reasons I don't like sequels is there's usually a spark missing that was integral to the original," he adds. "They take what worked in the first film and jack it up so that you lose the spontaneity. I don't consider myself a director who can achieve that kind of jacking up. It's not my strength."

While Warner Brothers toyed with sequel ideas, Burton directed *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* at 20th Century-Fox, a return to his personal roots that cinematically purged him of the overwhelming *BATMAN* experience. "I was looking to do something smaller and a bit more under control, so to speak," admits Burton, who co-produced the film with

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by Taylor White



"Albert Speer with a little Dr. Suess thrown in," is how art director Rick Heinrichs describes the expressionistic design of the revised Gotham City.

Denise Di Novi (MEET THE APPLLEGATES), as opposed to the overbearing sextet of producers on BATMAN.

Meanwhile, BATMAN scribe Sam Hamm was contracted to script a sequel. The result was a more frenetic extension of the first film, pitting Batman against art thief Selina Kyle and the oddly

named Mr. Bodiface (a.k.a. the Penguin), a finicky ultra-rich bird trainer. Hamm furthered the relationship between Bruce Wayne and Vicky Vale, even having the two engaged in the finale.

As in his first script, Hamm attempted to introduce Dick Grayson (a.k.a. Robin) in the form of an acrobatic street kid dressed in red and green who embarks on a crime-fighting

spree of his own. The dynamic duo pair up when the costumed boy saves Batman from being tossed off a 12-story building by the Catwoman.

Though true to the first film, retreading familiar territory proved to be a negative for the director. "It was unfortunate," recalls Burton, "because Sam took a crack at it during the time when I was very skeptical. I told myself I'd keep a little dis-

tance and try to respond to the script as freshly as possible. Unfortunately, reading it made me think I was wrong in doing a sequel, which was nothing against Sam. In fact, it was probably a good script. It was just too close, too soon."

Next to don the writer's cape was Daniel Waters, who had scripted HEATHERS, a comically subversive tale of death and teen angst pro-



A certain wistful sadness permeates the look of the film, reflecting the characters' damaged psyches. Even the repugnant Penguin receives his share of pathos, as when he enters a cemetery (left), searching for the names of the parents who abandoned him as a baby (below).



duced by Di Novi. Waters, who had met Burton once before to pitch ideas on a proposed BEETLEJUICE sequel, was in Italy at the time grudgingly doing on-set rewrites on Warners' ill-fated HUDSON HAWK.

After another meeting, it became apparent that Waters' offbeat style and wicked sense of humor was perfect for the material, which in turn sparked the director's interest. "Dan re-energized it for me, in a way," Burton comments. "He was the one who started me thinking that maybe these characters could give it a new and different kind of energy."

Though not a follower of the comics or the TV series, Waters took in as much of the Batman mythology as he could in a short time-span. He credits Frank Miller's graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns* with leaving the deepest impression. "I think it's one of the best things done in any medium in the last five years. In fact, I was one of those naive people who thought, 'Why not just make a movie out of Miller's version?' Then you realize that no studio is going to spend \$60 million on a movie where five hundred people get killed on THE DAVID LETTERMAN SHOW."

Waters also felt that BATMAN left room for improvement. "I'm one of those people who came out thinking that, even though it certainly wasn't unentertaining, it still lacked in story and dialogue. But I've learned you can't blame Sam Hamm, because once a budget gets over \$50 million, you have to fight for every little piece of your script. You're lucky if any of it turns out right."

For Waters, the main draw in scripting BATMAN RETURNS was Catwoman. "You can tell from HEATHERS that I've always had a great interest in female psychology. Catwoman was a perfect way to tap into themes of female rage and explode them into this mythical character. Plus, I knew I could get away with more since we were working on a much larger canvas, certainly more than if we

BATMAN RETURNS

THE PENGUIN

Danny DeVito on recreating Oswald Cobblepot for Tim Burton.

During the making of THE WAR OF THE ROSES, actor Michael Douglas handed his then-director Danny DeVito a newspaper article reporting DeVito's interest in playing the Penguin in the proposed follow-up to BATMAN. The story came as a complete surprise to DeVito. "I was stunned," he remembers. "I'd never talked about it to anybody, and frankly I resented it."

A year later, DeVito received a call from Tim Burton, who was himself only recently getting used to the idea of a new, improved Batman and a fresh pair of villains. Upon their first meeting, it became apparent that the director wanted a characterization that bore little or no resemblance to previous Penguins. "The last thing I wanted to hear from Tim was that we were going to do the Penguin from the comic book or the TV series," recalls DeVito. "I knew a little bit about the guy, and I respected him as a director, so it didn't surprise me when he told me his conception of this visual and psychological image of the duality of the character and of the Penguin's origins."

DeVito, himself a father of three, gravitated to Burton's offbeat notions of the character's harrowing birth. "The most glorious and beautiful thing you can ever experience is being in the same room when a woman is giving birth," he attests. "So can you imagine being in the Cobblepott mansion on that night when what emerges is this globular, unformed mass with two eyes, a nose and a mouth, yet nothing that is humanly recognizable? They're shocked and horrified. They hate it and they hate themselves, so they throw it out like a piece of garbage." Following a long, savory pause, DeVito shrieks, "Hey, I'm in! I felt like we could use this as a launching pad to create this huge opera that could be NOSFERATU. It was



DeVito's repulsive Penguin, seen above in all his bile-spewing glory, is one of the hideous highlights of Burton's eccentric film.

exciting and challenging, and I felt immediately that I wanted to explore it more."

While Burton and DeVito worked with Daniel Waters to integrate the Penguin into the script, DeVito had to go through a full physical transformation, courtesy of Stan Winston and his crew. As he recalls, "The most difficult times came during the exploration period when the character was being designed. For instance, we had to take full body and face molds early on, which are very uncomfortable, but once the makeup went on, it was very comfortable and helpful in an odd way, even though it may have looked cumbersome. Usually as an actor you're given the luxury of hiding behind a character to act and react and play the game, but here I could take it even farther. Once I put the mask on an incredible thing began to happen: I was completely free, and I felt like I could do anything. I almost felt like I could turn to the audience and

talk, do a Shakespearean turn on it, like in RICHARD III, where Laurence Olivier with his hump could do the walk and be miserable and lustful and talk about killing kids up in the tower. It was exhilarating."

Coupled with the makeup, DeVito altered his voice without electronic enhancement, giving his Penguin a pained, guttural quality. "Part of it was trying to find out what his deformity was, and it came down to the fact that breathing for him wasn't a natural thing like it is for all of us. He had to force himself to breathe, like a contraction where he'd have to push the breath in and out in order to keep himself alive. He was constantly battling to stay alive."

Due to the uniqueness of the makeup, DeVito found that interacting with anyone outside the crew was impossible. "I couldn't see anybody on the set," he explains. "No friends, no family, no business associates or interviews, and no studio executives, which was a joy," he jokes. "I had to do this because once I put on the makeup and got into character, it would've been too jarring for me to go from this kind of world to the real world. There was no way I could communicate with anybody on a reality-based level. It was okay to do it over the phone because people couldn't see the webbed hands and the beak, but never in person."

DeVito also spent much of his time in seclusion, prepping HOFFA, his next directorial film, starring ex-Joker Jack Nicholson as the famed union leader. When asked if he ever sought advice from his longtime colleague, DeVito quips, "The only thing we discussed was the deal," adding, "It's got more to do with putting your kids through college."

Taylor White

BATMAN RETURNS

REPRISING THE DARK KNIGHT

*Michael Keaton on his
second bat-performance.*

People are always outside the door with a mallet waiting for you to mess up the sequel," says Michael Keaton of his initial reluctance to reprise the Dark Knight, "and sequels in general aren't very good." But once Tim Burton, Keaton's three-time collaborator, stepped in to put his decidedly twisted and original spin on *BATMAN RETURNS*, the actor conceded. "The main reason I wanted to do it was because of Tim. Also, with Michelle and Danny there, I knew the cast was going to be solid early on. Plus, I'd never gotten to do a role a second time, and since the story was so good, it made me want to do it again."

Unlike *BATMAN*, in which Joker Jack Nicholson played a spirited, scene-stealing clown to Keaton's glum caped crusader, Keaton faced not one but two colorfully written villains. "There were a lot of times when I'd look at the Penguin or the Joker and say, 'Gee, I'd love to chew it up a bit,' but I think I functioned the way I was supposed to function."

Despite the competition, Keaton found himself more content with his man in the mask than before. "I was more comfortable being Batman but a hair less being Bruce Wayne, just because I think the role's underwritten, though I'm partly responsible. I was actually taking lines out, especially with Batman because I liked him pared down to a more Spartan approach. One of the main functions Tim and I wanted was for him to direct the energy toward his eyes. This was where he expressed himself and where his intentions were made. It's where a lot of his story is told from."

On the flip side, Keaton wanted to add quality, not quantity to his millionaire alter ego's screen time. "I didn't want Bruce Wayne to do more than in the first one, but I wanted him to be richer in character. I wanted to lighten him up more by not letting him fall back on that contemplative, morose, 'Boy, I'm really deep' kind of thing. I wanted to give him more opportunities to be funny and not sulk so much, and even though there's more comedy in this, it's dark comedy."

BATMAN RETURNS also had Keaton doing more of his own stunt work at Burton's request, he says. "Tim wanted me to do more because he's so detailed and sometimes he'd notice differences in movements between my stuntmen, Mike Cassidy and David Lee, and me. I had a certain way I moved in the suit, which had a more distinct attitude this time. It was stronger and more precise."

One scene had him laid out flat on the floor with tongue-happy co-star Pfeiffer, an act he says looks more arousing on screen than in real life. "Those scenes always end up being not quite as hot while you're doing them because there's the reality of someone saying, 'Can you put your neck in a different position?' Then they'll say, 'Okay! Now lick him!' But then in the end when you get licked by Michelle Pfeiffer, how bad can it be?"

Unlike Pfeiffer, Keaton is willing to expound more on the racier aspects of the two warring characters. "The interesting thing is that there's this obvious sexual tension that's compounded by this element of physical fighting, which makes it even hotter in some kind of bent way. It's a direct physical contact



"There were a lot of times when I'd look at the Penguin or the Joker and say, 'I'd like to chew it up a bit,' but I think I functioned the way I was supposed to."

that isn't affectionate, and he's confused by it. We could probably spend weeks breaking this down, and while I wouldn't say it's out-and-out S&M at all, I'm sure it could get into some primal questions."

On the lighter side, Keaton was mildly annoyed by the studio's last-minute addition of the final optical effect showing Catwoman silhouetted against the bat signal, after test audiences found the original ending too ambiguous. "You didn't need to see the visual at the very end. Before, I thought it was just vague enough but still clear. I don't think they give people enough credit, but apparently research cards said, 'What happened?'"

Keaton also admits that *BATMAN RETURNS* is "a tad too twisted for young kids," but he is firm in his response when asked if the violence has any effect on impressionable audience members. "I have to be honest with you; it's a fuckin' movie. I'm sorry, and I'll be one of the first to lead this charge if I think it applies, but Gotham City is a whole different world. It's another reality, and the people in this movie don't necessarily exist. And while I

felt there were a couple of moments that I thought were too violent while we were shooting them, when I saw it on the screen, I thought it totally worked."

When pressed about which specific instances in the film made him flinch, he notes the scene in which the firebreather gets torched by the Batmobile's exhaust. "I was a little shocked by it, mainly because it's so totally un-Tim Burton-like. It's not like him at all, and it's not like me, either. But the vast majority of it is such a cartoon and so far removed from what real life is like."

"I think we're taking movies too seriously; I really do," he concludes. "I think we're so movie-conscious on so many levels, and what worries me are the people who are really movie freaks, more specifically, the science-fiction and Batman freaks, whom we used to call the DC fundamentalists. I know they pay a lot of money to see these movies, so I'm not going to make fun of them, but I just don't relate. I don't get it. I mean, there are movies, and there are books. Then there's life!"

Taylor White

were making a movie about 'normal' people."

The script also gave the writer license to create his own villain in the form of Christopher Walken's nefarious Max Shreck, named after Max Schreck, the star of F. W. Murnau's *NOSFERATU* (1922). "Max Schreck played a character who sucked blood from the population," says Waters, "and Max Shreck is also something of a vampire, sucking up energy, power, and money from Gotham City. With Shreck I wanted to touch on the theme that the biggest villains aren't necessarily the ones who wear costumes but the ones who are respected members of society. Sure, you have this flamboyant mutant who is definitely a strong, out-there, in-your-face kind of villain, but I wanted to have fun with the fact that the real villain—the guy who's more powerful than anyone else in the film—is also the most upstanding citizen."

During script meetings, Waters found himself jousting with Burton over the director's insistence on keeping the two movies separate. "He was obsessed with the thought that this had to be an entirely different film. Whenever I'd make an occasional reference to the Joker or Vicky Vale, I'd have to fight with him to get it in. I remember, when we were trying to come up with titles, Tim suggested that we call it *BATMAN* again. He literally wanted to redefine the meaning of the title."

When writing the script, Waters was well aware that Danny Devito was the likeliest candidate to play the Penguin. "It actually hurt, in that I made that common mistake of thinking 'Well, what would Danny Devito say?' It was funny talking to Danny after he read my first draft because, if he was going to do *BATMAN*, the last thing he wanted was another 'Throw Ruthless People from the Train' kind of thing. He really wanted to get wild, which I think inspired Tim a lot."

After several drafts were completed, Wesley Strick (*ARACHNOPHOBIA*) was hired to polish the script. Waters reflects, "My script was written a little on the operatic side in terms of dialogue:

SEQUEL SYNDROME

"They usually take what worked in the first film and jack it up so that you lose the spontaneity," says Burton. "I don't consider myself a director who can achieve that."



Tim Burton directs the splendid character actor Michael Gough as Alfred.

everybody speaks a little over the top. Wesley had to 'normalize' some of the dialogue. Maybe it was *HUDSON HAWK* that scared them," he jokes.

He also adds, "I'm definitely from the school where I tried to have psychology everywhere. I made a lot of the characters more reflective and cynical than Tim wanted, especially the Bruce Wayne/Batman character. I originally wrote him as a burnt-out super hero who would complain that 'Gotham City probably deserves the Penguin.' Tim and Michael [Keaton] rightfully felt that he shouldn't be so self-aware. They thought of him as a wounded soul who was still dealing with his own psyche and probably wouldn't be able to formulate those kinds of opinions yet. So with Wesley they wanted someone who could go in and turn a lot of my text into subtext, which is admittedly where it belongs. I don't think anybody wants to hear Batman talking about how he's 'the light and the dark.' Let Pauline Kael tell us that."

Coupled with the dialogue adjustments, Strick found himself giving the Penguin a more

cohesive master plan than his atypical, Joker-like need to destroy Gotham City. "When I read the script over a few times, I started to get associations that were slightly biblical," he recalls. "There were little hints and clues and images that already suggested there was a Moses thing going on with the Penguin being thrown into the sewer by his well-to-do parents. So even though he was born evil and malignant, in his mind he was denied his birthright, his position in the world and in Gotham City. The idea of having him singlehandedly bring this Old Testament plague on all the first born sons of Gotham City was just a logical fulfillment of what had already been established in earlier drafts. There's a reason why this type of thing retains its power over three or four millennia: it works every time."

On the lighter side, Strick admits to initially being drawn to Waters' sly interplay between bat and cat. "This script gave the story an added dimension I didn't find in the first movie. It's much more rounded with the whole subplot approaching issues of sex and

desire and love and romance in ways that the first movie didn't get into at all. I really liked the whole Batman-Catwoman and Bruce-Selina story, which reminded me of Elizabethan plays and even the later Shakespearean comedies, like *TWELFTH NIGHT* or *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, with people falling in and out of love with others in costume. They were all about romance and deception and disguise and had moments of high and low comedy. I think the comedy of Bruce and Selina trying to get together is sweet and emotional but of course ultimately very sad."

The masked duo's predicament bears a curious resemblance to other Strick scripts, namely *CAPE FEAR* and *FINAL ANALYSIS*, where the romantic aspects get mutated into darker territory. "I'll agree that there is a notion that romance and eros leads to misery and death, but there's also poignancy to this story that rescues it from being completely nihilistic. I wanted to engage the audience emotionally and have them be moved by the belief that even a failed attempt at romance is better than none at all."

In the end, Hamm received co-story credit alongside Waters, mainly because it was his draft that introduced Penguin and Catwoman as the main villains. Strick's credit in turn fell by the wayside after a Writers Guild arbitration opted to give Waters solo writing credit.

W

While the script went through development, Burton and Di Novi assembled a crew, mostly of alumni from earlier Burton films, including director of photography Stefan Chapsky, physical effects specialist Chuck Gaspar, and composer Danny Elfman. Those first to be brought on board were production designer Bo Welch and art directors Rick Heinrichs and Tom Duffield, who labored on Gotham's decadent surroundings for over a year.

Welch was faced with modifying the late Anton Furst's darkly vibrant designs for the first film. "I don't feel we were

chained to the first movie," he says. "We basically worked within the same parameters: that Gotham is a caricature of a city. But our approach was a little more loose and fun. The first one to me was very nostalgic; ours was more fascist. That's partly why we blanketed everything in snow: it radically changes the environment by giving things a stronger black and white contrast."

According to Heinrichs, who describes the new Gotham as Nazi architect "Albert Speer with a little Dr. Suess thrown in," the approach reflects the expressionist influence that has surfaced in various Burton-Heinrichs collaborations dating back to their 1982 black-and-white Disney short, *VINCENT*. "German Expressionism has always been a great way of using light and shadow to make a visual statement. To a degree, we drained some of the colors in this movie to give the city a muted, more oppressive and claustrophobic quality. It's a way of visually adding subtlety."

Borrowing from sources like the Rockefeller Center and the neo-fascist World's Fair, Welch and the art directors concocted a phantasmagoric conglomerate of colorful decadence. "We wanted Gotham to represent the old American city—rotted, corrupt, and full of character and life," he explains. "There had to be that juxtaposition of old and new, and decay and fascism, like in Gotham Plaza where you have these poor citizens trying to celebrate Christmas with this beautiful 40-foot tree stuck in the middle of the dreariest, most imposing buildings we could fit on the sound stage."

Filming began under a well-cloaked shroud of secrecy in September 1990. In keeping with the casting of high-powered names in the villain roles, Danny Devito and Michelle Pfeiffer were pegged as the leads, despite a well-documented attempt by uber-actress Sean Young to fill the catsuit left empty by the previously cast Annette Bening's pregnancy.

Although Devito was always first choice for the Penguin, creating the actual character for him to play proved a tough

BAT MEETS CAT ROMANCE

"Bruce and Selina trying to get together is sweet and emotional but ultimately sad," says Wesley Strick. "Even a failed attempt at romance is better than none at all."



Wayne unwittingly falls for the alter ego of his nighttime nemesis; ironically, at this masked ball, he and Selina Kyle are the only dancers sans costumes.

task. As Burton explains, the beaked menace's nebulous history represented what impressed him least about comic book movies. "I always hate it when there's just a bunch of weird people running around, like in *DICK TRACY*, where there's no basis to the world that's been created. I personally don't find much power in the fact that these are funny looking people and nothing more. There should always be a foundation no matter how absurd or ridiculous it may be.

"The Penguin was always the character I liked the least because he never made sense in the same way that the Joker or Batman or the Catwoman did—he never had that simple, weird strength," the director continues. "I mean, what is the Penguin supposed to be anyway? I felt that if somebody was going to be called 'The Penguin,' there should be a reason for that.

The result, as scripted by Waters, was to give Oswald Cobblepot (the Penguin's given name, as in the comic books) a solid origin, from his bizarre birth and upbringing to his inevitable downfall. "That

aspect of the film is the one that went through the most real creation," says Burton. "He really was an invention that had as much to do with the script as it did with Danny Devito, myself, and everybody from the costume people to the makeup people. We went through the process of taking it as far as we could go without losing the spirit of the original until he finally really transformed. We worked very hard, but it was one of the most gratifying parts of making the film."

"The bottom line is that I borrowed more props than psychology," Waters concurs of updating the villains. "With the Penguin and Catwoman I tried to move away from the stock Bob Kane versions."

Burton adds that Devito proved an excellent subject in the demanding role which not only called for him to spend hours enduring the Lon Chaney-like makeover with Ve Neill applying Stan Winston's design but also put him in a full-body silicone fat suit and webbed rubber latex flippers constructed for the specialty costume. Says Burton, "The good thing about Danny is that

he was very passionate and had a 100% commitment to creating something different, and having directed himself made him a more understanding person to work with."

To bring the Catwoman into the '90s, a dose of *THELMA AND LOUISE* feminism was added. The character "has gone through several different incarnations in the TV show and the comics, but I think our portrayal is much more modern," explains Burton. "One way to portray feminism is to show strong women beating up on men, but the Catwoman is a positive and negative character who's just as screwed up as any of the other characters. She's a lot like Batman in that she was transformed due to negative events, and even though she's trying to be good in a way, she's completely screwed up just like he is. I actually find that much more realistic in terms of a metaphor for life."

For Pfeiffer's costume, it was Burton himself who opted to obliterate the comic and TV renditions by dressing her in a kinky, skintight outfit. "I'm always thinking about what we can do to keep things fresh," he explains. "There's too much work involved to just copy the costumes out of a comic book or a TV show. You might as well try to do something different, especially when you've got this kind of material that gives you room to push the boundaries a bit."

W

With all of the sequel's changes, the one element that remains largely the same is Batman himself—still the stoic, silent type, as Keaton insisted on keeping his character methodically aloof. "Michael had a very shrewd grasp on the Batman character," says Waters. "He's the only actor who can look at a scene and say there's too much. And since he didn't want Batman talking very much it made the character very tough to write. There came a point when we figured we needed more. But the problem is that, since the guy is so impulsive and keeps to himself so much, when he does talk,

BATMAN RETURNS CATWOMAN

*Michelle Pfeiffer on
feline feminism.*

If Sigourney Weaver and Linda Hamilton introduced a new breed of tough but maternal genre heroine, then Michelle Pfeiffer's whip-cracking dominatrix of **BATMAN RETURNS** is their dark, psycho-feminist alter ego. Bubbling just beneath the battered cowl is enough ripe sensuality and twisted rage to make them look like mere kittens to her spitting panther.

Catwoman is a far cry from Pfeiffer's demure performances in **DANGEROUS LIAISONS** and **THE RUSSIA HOUSE**. "I was getting sick of the melancholy roles, so I was delighted when the opportunity presented itself," she says. That opportunity arose after Annette Bening's much publicized parting, but Pfeiffer couldn't fully comprehend the magnitude of her decision until it came time to don the head-to-toe rubber catsuit. "The first few weeks were miserable," she groans, "painful to the point where I couldn't really walk or breath or hear or talk. I kept wondering how I would I ever get beyond all of these uncomfortable obstacles to do a decent job."

Despite the initial discomfort, Pfeiffer found that being inside the suit helped her with the Catwoman characterization, for which she adopted a deep Joan Crawford-inspired voice. "I found it much easier playing the bumbling, nerdy Selina. I really had to work my way towards Catwoman," she says. "When you look at yourself in the mirror, you can't help but feel different wearing this outfit. And on the last day, it was so liberating finally taking it off, yet at the same time it was kind of sad to hang up my suit."

While the costume sealed her exterior, Pfeiffer found that raw inhibition was the key to the character. "I'm dressed up like a cat, totally

exposed and behaving in ways that women aren't normally conditioned to behave. In order to do this, I had to let go of all my inhibition in a bigger way than I've ever had to do before. I knew I was in good hands with Tim, but in the hands of a lesser director, it would've been a very broad thing to do."

Though she had a hoard of stunt doubles and world champion kickboxer Kathy Long doing her flashier routines, Pfeiffer went through her own rigorous training for the role. "I loved the physicality of the character. I started training about a month before shooting and averaged four hours a day doing kickboxing, some martial arts, yoga, and gymnastics."

She also became proficient with the character's trademark bullwhip, courtesy of maestro Anthony DeLongis. "I loved the whip," she laughs. "There was a beauty and an elegance and a sexuality and almost a graceful dance-like quality to it that at any moment could turn violent. I thought this made it much more threatening and certainly more feline and feminine."

On the subject of whips and provocative black attire, Pfeiffer tends to sidestep the more sado-masochistic overtones of her character. "I don't think it's an issue," she says defensively. "I mean, what, I lick Batman's face. Big deal. I'm not tying him up or beating him up and having sex with him. It's all open to interpretation; besides, there are far more explicit things on television."

Instead, she prefers to take a different slant, saying, "I look at the movie more metaphorically, in that it's a statement about empowerment and about this character's coming into her own, and part of



"I don't think it's an issue," says Pfeiffer of her S&M attire, based on Mary Vogt's costume designs (r).

that is her sexuality. It's a strong theme in today's society because there probably isn't a woman alive who doesn't know what it feels like to be in the work force and not be listened to. There are so many out there who are harassed and are terrified of their boss, who haven't been able to find a voice for themselves. I think she's an inspiration and a positive role model for women, even though she's also very tragic."

According to Pfeiffer, her Catwoman reflects the times as much as the comic book character has over the years. "When you look at the evolution of Catwoman in the old comic books from the '30s, she was obviously representative of women from that era. And when you look at her in the '50s, she's more voluptuous and kitten-like while in the '70s she became much more muscular and streamlined. The Catwoman in this movie is definitely a reflection of what's happening today."

As a tyke, Pfeiffer confesses to being a fan of Julie Newmar's Catwoman from the 1966 TV series. "I liked the fact that she did forbidden things and broke a lot of social taboos at the time. I mean little girls are brought up to be good and behave and certainly not act in any



kind of physically aggressive manner, and yet here was this woman who dressed up like a black cat and was mean and vicious, yet you were allowed to love her at the same time. Those to me are always the most memorable and engaging villains."

With **BATMAN FOREVER** directed by Joel Schumacher, it has been widely reported that Tim Burton is interested in pursuing a separate film featuring Pfeiffer's Catwoman. "I'd love to do it if Tim were up for it, but these movies take a lot out of him," the actress admits. "I feel like I just began. Toward the end of shooting **BATMAN FOREVER**, I was really up to speed where I began having lots of fun with the character. I'd really like to see how much further it would evolve."

Taylor White



The film's real monster is Christopher Walken's Max Shreck, whose respected name looms large over Gotham City (above). Shreck orchestrates a mayoral campaign for Cobblepot (left), who craves recognition and acceptance.

he gets to the point so fast that there's no real ornamentation to his character."

The writer's alternative for embellishing Batman's dual personalities was to mix him up with the bad guys. "Having him entangled with Catwoman—not only by day with his tentative romantic relationship with Selina Kyle, but also at night while they're beating the hell out of each other on the rooftops of Gotham—helps to meld the characters together so that it doesn't become a question of 'we need a scene with the hero now.'"

According to Burton, the complexity of the characters adds substance to what could be standard comic book fodder. "To me, the interest in the world of Batman is that it's not as simplistically good-versus-evil as a lot of the comics. There are a lot of grey areas within these characters, like Batman, who is basically good, but is also very screwed up. I find there's something quite appealing about a bunch of

screwed up characters. It's more twisted in a way. That's what's hard about it, but that's also what's fun about the material. It's all these characters who are very serious, but who are also completely absurd.

"I've always liked the freakish nature of the Batman material," he adds. "The biggest problem is that we were trying to make a big movie that had to satisfy on a certain popular level, yet we were dealing with what I consider somewhat subversive material that isn't really cut and dry. It's not exactly the kind of material that lends itself to an expensive movie, and I think it's what tends to make the studios nervous."

A character who once again didn't make the roster was the elusive Dick Grayson, despite then-studio head Mark Canton's insistence on including him. "We always saw him as problematic," comments Burton, "even when Sam and I were trying to fit him into the first one. He's practically in a no-win situation, since Batman

isn't psychologically integrated enough to surround himself with other people like Robin."

A more critical Waters says, "We never liked him in the comics or the TV series, and he certainly didn't fit in with our Batman, who is definitely a brooding loner." Burton concurs: "It's funny, but there's a lot of people who don't like Robin. I've heard it from people who are into the TV show; and even some people who are into the comics don't like the character either."

Waters made several attempts to fit the character into the new script. Taking a minor cue from the Bob Kane comics, Robin was portrayed in Waters' earliest drafts as an acrobatic member of the Penguin's gang until discovering that the beaky crime boss is responsible for his parents' demise. In drafts written closer to the start of production, Robin was a garage mechanic who assists Batman in retaking the Batmobile after the Penguin hijacks the vehicle for his wild ride through Gotham. "It was probably the way to go," says Waters. "We even wrote him as tough and cynical, certainly not like the Dick Grayson of the comics; but as the film went into production, there were just too many characters. It got to be absurd."

"I know everybody looked for him," admits Burton, "but if you're going to do justice to the character, you have to incorporate him into the story from the

very beginning. Even though Dan was the first person to make me realize it could work, we ultimately felt there was too much going on."

One of the few key crew members to make the crossover from BATMAN was costume designer Bob Ringwood. The sequel's expanded budget allowed Ringwood and his crew to more clearly realize the hyper-stylized look Burton wanted for his new denizens of Gotham. One of the designs that benefitted from the extra funding was the new Batsuit. "In the first film, the producers wanted the suit to be more muscular, which was confusing since you never knew whether he was actually a muscleman or he was wearing a suit," says Ringwood. "Tim felt this suit was too strong and powerful and wanted it to be softer for the sequel."

Ringwood's original unused designs for BATMAN rendered the outfit with sharper edges, giving it an armor-like exterior. When the opportunity arose to modify the suit, Ringwood pulled out his initial drawings; and Vin Burnham, who sculpted the first suit, was flown in from England to sculpt and oversee the creation of the new outfit, with the assistance of sculptors Allison Einon, Jose Fernandez, and Steve Wang. More pre-production time allowed the crew to perfect both the interior and exterior, using a collapsible core to eliminate the glaring seam on

THE STRONG, SILENT TYPE

“Michael’s the only actor who can look at a scene and say there’s too much. Since he didn’t want Batman talking too much, it was very tough to write the character.”

the back of the first suit’s cowl and having an exact digitized replica of Michael Keaton’s head made by Cyberwear to assure a perfect fit. “Superficially, it looked like the first costume,” says Ringwood, “but it was much more sleek and intimidating. We changed the shape of the eyes and strengthened the brows and the nose. We even changed the shape of the chin slightly.”

Directing **BATMAN RETURNS** gave Burton an opportunity to recreate his own brand of action. “I’m not an action director, which was part of the problem on the first movie: it was like I was trying to make my own movie; then all of a sudden it tried to be this big action movie,” he admits. “There are people like Jim Cameron who are good at doing action, so I didn’t feel there was any point in doing the kind of stuff they do. I wanted action with a different tone that could be more filtered through the process I go through and that would be a more integral part of the movie we were making. Good or bad, I think it fit better this time. The work was very representative of the movie, so I felt better.”

But perhaps the greatest leap Burton made between **BATMAN I** and **II** was over the giant gap of ever changing visual effects technology. Burton, whose first two films celebrated the art of cheap and cheesy, admits to missing the mark on his first big-budget foray. “I went into **BATMAN** thinking I could do the same funky effects we did on **BEETLEJUICE**,” he explains, “which was a real mistake, partially because we were dealing with people from another country and things got a bit lost in the translation. I quickly learned

that **BEETLEJUICE**-style effects in a big movie end up looking cheesy as opposed to being more fun.”

To realize the spectacular effects presented by the script, hundreds of artists and technicians throughout numerous L.A.-based facilities were recruited. Along with Stan Winston, participating shops included Richard Edlund’s Boss Film, Robert and Dennis Skotak’s 4-Ward Productions, Video Images Associates, and Marin County’s Matte World.

While the film required over 25 matte paintings and 100 miniature shots, major strides in computer technology offered Burton the chance to bring flocks of bats and penguins to Gotham City in a startlingly realistic manner. “Using computers had become less experimental,” effects supervisor Michael Fink remarks. “It was no longer a novelty where I risk my entire career whenever I suggested doing something with computers. For example, the Batmobile’s security cloak was done as a computer graphic image, along with the flying bats. Those were all shots that could have been done in traditional ways, but not nearly as successfully or with as much flexibility.”

Though Boss Film’s computer imagery created hordes of warbound penguins, Stan Winston and his crew were called upon to create three-dimensional penguin puppets and suits for various shots. “It’s impossible to direct real penguins,” says Winston. “You can’t get them to hit a particular mark or march in sequence like the script needed them to do. So we did the best we could to replicate real life, to make them anatomically and cosmetically correct, so that we were able to get a performance out of a creature that oth-



“He gets to the point so fast that there’s no real ornamentation to his character,” says Waters of writing for Keaton’s version of Batman.

erwise couldn’t perform.”

Also integrated with the puppets were a flock of live penguins provided by Richard Hill of England’s Birdland. As Mary Mason remembers, the real birds sometimes integrated almost too well with the mock-ups. “One day we finished filming, and the trainers rounded up the real penguins into their corrals, leaving the static puppets on the set. Lat-

er, when Tim was standing on the island, he looked over and suddenly saw one of the penguins turning its head. It turned out to be one of the live penguins, which had stood perfectly still between two of the puppets for over an hour and nobody noticed. That tells you that under the right lighting and conditions, the puppets were wonderful facsimiles.”

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Beverly Garland, star of such '50s sci-fi flicks as *NOT OF THIS EARTH* and *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD*, reunited with producer Roger Corman last year on *THE HAUNTED SYMPHONY*. In a switch from her capable heroine roles, the veteran actress plays the servant of an evil composer, Carlotta, who commits suicide (above) so that her spirit can take possession of the young ingenue. Below: While admiring her new self, Carlotta's spirit is revealed in the mirror.



BEVERLY

Competent, classy &

By Dennis Fischer

When it comes to science fiction and horror roles for women, the stereotypes are victims, villainesses, and vixens. Competent female characters are a rarity, especially compared to all the bimbos and imperiled girlfriends in most genre fare. However, resourceful heroines are not unknown; in fact, they have long been a specialty of genre favorite Beverly Garland.

Not only has Garland appeared in such memorable cult films as *D.O.A.*, *WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS*, and *PRETTY POISON*, matched wits with monsters in *IT CONQUERED THE EARTH*, *NOT OF THIS WORLD*, and *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE*, but also she has consistently played a kind of upfront and forceful female not often seen in films of any type. A Garland heroine is apt to be experienced, tough, and cynical—never an ingénue or a demure housewife out of her depth. When trouble strikes, her characters are always ready to face it head on, a reflection of her own personality.

Garland settled into "B" pictures after being blackballed in the '50s for playing television's first policewoman heroine, Casey Jones, in the 1957 syndicated series *DECOY*. Her subsequent career includes continuing roles on *THE BING CROSBY SHOW*, *MY THREE SONS*, and *SCARECROW AND MRS. KING*, but prejudice against television actors kept her out of mainstream studio films after *THE JOKER IS WILD*, with Frank Sinatra, in 1957. However, the studios' loss was our genre's gain, as Garland's spunky and forthright performances have enlivened a number of cult clas-

sics, many of them made in the '50s for legendary low-budget filmmaker Roger Corman.

"Absolutely, I'm a 'cult' actress," says Garland today, "and I never dreamed that would happen to me. You would do these pictures for Roger Corman or for whomever, get your money, go home and throw the script away, never dreaming in a thousand years that anybody would ever say, 'Tell me about the monster in *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD*.' You just never dreamed that anybody was going to care, ever. Now when I go to all these shows—*Monsterama* or whatever they are—people are just fascinated, and they know more about the movies than I ever remembered. At the time that I did these monster movies, I needed the money and I had to pay my rent, but now I look back and it's become such a cult that it's fun to have done them. I'm really pleased that that happened."

Commenting on why these films still attract interest, Garland says, "I think they have become cult films because they were well done. The scripts may not be the most fabulous that you ever saw; however, the actors are so honest and so real that you don't care about the script. It's funny, because the monster is stupid-looking, but everybody is very real. I think that has a lot to do with why they are still around and why they play so well today. Most of the people who did these movies at the time when I did them were actors and actresses who really cared. They were looking for a job; they were looking to get ahead, so they really worked hard. That's why the pictures worked as well as they did: everybody took it very serious-

GARLAND

capable cult heroine.

ly; nobody did it tongue-in-cheek."

Her first film for Corman was *SWAMP WOMEN* (1955), in which she was a police-woman infiltrating a female gang of thieves, proving she was as hardboiled as the next dame. The film was made in the Louisiana bayou with the actors put up at an abandoned hotel with no practical amenities. Her next Corman film was *THE GUNSLINGER* (1956), wherein she portrayed a marshal's wife who takes over for her slain husband, a rare feminist western. The film established her as a lead actress and also as quite a trouper.

Never an equestrian, Garland was required to do her own riding and stunt work, including a leap onto a horse. The first time she tried it, she missed; the second time, she twisted her ankle. As Garland recalls, "They didn't let me go home—don't kid yourself. We finished the day and they got me on and did certain cuts so it would look like I did get on the horse. I get home and put this foot in hot water. The next morning, my ankle was huge. I couldn't get my shoes on; I couldn't get my Levis on. I couldn't drive, so I called up my boyfriend, and he got me over to the studio. I walked in and said, 'Roger, I can't work; I can't walk on this thing. I can't get in my boots, and I can't get in my clothes, and I don't know what I'm going to do.'

"He said, 'Well, it'll be all right.' He sent the wardrobe girl in, and she cut the Levis in the back; then he sent the boot man in, and he cut the boots in the back. This doctor came in with a nice big needle and went *kerchook* about four times in the bone of my ankle, and in ten minutes I was *fabulous*. I could jump; I could

swing; I could do anything, and I worked all day. I did all the stunts, and we did all the fighting and everything, and when the day was over, Roger said 'good job,' and I went home. And the next morning, *oh boy*. I don't think I walked on that foot for a good month. Almost ruined myself. That's Roger: the show must go on."

For Garland, whose career spans over four decades, the show goes on as well. She admits that she's never happier than when she's in the midst of things, getting dirty in some exotic location, not worrying about her hairdo or makeup. She takes a hands-on approach to life and to acting, as practical and down-to-earth as the many characters she's played.

In *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD* (1956), she played Lee Van Cleef's backtalking wife, who clearly loves her husband yet hates how he's assisting a Venusian cucumber to take over the Earth. Despairing of changing his mind, she gets directly confrontational with the beastie with disastrous results. As she recalls, when Corman first showed her the monster suit designed by Paul Blaisdell, it was the size of a foot cushion (based on the theory that a short, squat creature would be a more accurate scientific representation of an inhabitant of Venus). However, Garland's initial reaction (she laughed scornfully and kicked the diminutive invader) led Corman to an overriding dramatic theory—that the leading lady should not be taller than the monster—and so a cone was added to Blaisdell's low-slung design.

In *NOT OF THIS EARTH* (1956), Garland was nurse Nadine Story, who in the manner of Jonathan Harker arrives at

"Absolutely, I'm a 'cult' actress, and I never dreamed that would happen to me...that anybody would ever say, 'Tell me about IT CONQUERED THE WORLD.'"



A recent shot of Garland, who now owns her own hotel in North Hollywood.

the home of a vampire from outer space. Part-way into production, Corman got into a fist-fight with Paul Birch, the actor playing the alien.

"I can't remember really what the whole fight was about; I just think Paul Birch was disgusted with the whole thing," Garland recalls. "He didn't like the way the picture was going. He had to wear these contacts, which hurt him, and he wasn't happy with Roger, and he became more and more unhappy about everything until finally he walked off. But by that time, we had enough film on hand that we could use what we had. A couple of times we had to use somebody's back, and it turned out great—you'd never have known."

Though several sources credit her with appearing in *THE NEANDERTHAL MAN* (1953), Garland mentions that, whenever she's asked about it, she says she doesn't remember. This is not surprising to those who have actually bothered to investigate the film it-

self: there is no evidence of her either on screen or in the credits. Nor does she recall anything about *THE ROCKET MAN* (1954), a minor 20th Century-Fox release co-scripted by Lenny Bruce, in which an orphan finds a ray gun that forces people to tell the truth.

Although Garland has called *CURUCU, BEAST OF THE AMAZON* (1956) one of the most interesting films she ever made, she is referring not to the final result but rather to the process of filming in Brazil, which she describes as "very difficult. Only [actor] John Bromfield, [director] Curt Siodmak, and I spoke English, and that was it." She also remembers that Siodmak allowed her to be wrapped in the coils of an anaconda without telling her of the potential danger—until after the shot was complete.

One of Garland's favorite roles was that of the atypically timid Jane Marvin in *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE* (1959). "That was fun," she says. "I just thought it was funny and



Garland (left) in one of her best efforts, *PRETTY POISON*, with Anthony Perkins (center) and Tuesday Weld (right).

wonderful. It was well done; it was great to do. I really like to do movies—and I always have—that are downright dirty and muddy and you look like the wrath of God and nobody gives a damn. I remember doing a television show set in the Sahara desert, where we're dying of thirst, and we were filthy and had no makeup. I loved it!"

Concerning her horror icon co-star in the film, she recalls, "Lon Chaney Jr. was a fun, wonderful guy. He would sit there and tell you all about his father and all the things he had learned. He had fabulous stories about his dad. I really liked him and I was very impressed with him."

The film develops some unintentional comedy when the monster, in the process of transformation, appears in a lab with what looks like a urinal over his head. Recalls Garland, "Some of the urinals-on-the-heads bit was cut out. When I opened the door to go into this laboratory the first time, there were a lot of men walking up and down the aisle, and when you see the film, there weren't a lot. I guess they realized they looked like urinals, so they cut it out and you don't see them. They only had one alligator head, which was being used, and they didn't know what else to do to have all these men turning into alligators, so they had to make

something. Alligators have a fairly large head and this big snout, so this white thing became like a white urinal. I tell you, when I opened the door and saw all these white urinals walking up and down, we had to go to lunch, because I could not stop laughing."

Throughout the years, Garland has frequently been asked about Corman. Commenting on his abilities as a filmmaker, she says, "The strength of Roger Corman, first of all, is that he is very bright—probably one of the brightest people in the business. He's not an egomaniac. He doesn't really care what you think; I mean, he's Roger Corman, and he does his thing. He doesn't care whether you think his movies are fabulous or particularly well made, because people watch them. He has a certain audience in mind, and he makes pictures for that audience. And they're exciting and interesting. He's not going to do *THE PIANO*, and he's not going to do *GONE WITH THE WIND*. He doesn't expect to do that, and you don't expect to see that when you see a Roger Corman film. So his niche is where he wants to be, I would assume, and he does very well at it.

"He started with the monster thing, and he does a lot of stuff with nudity today—I don't watch Roger Corman pictures, so I'm getting this from just

knowing Roger—but his picture-making is in a slot where he does it well; he does it fast; and he makes a lot of money doing it. He knows how to budget; he brings in new people as directors and writers, pays them very little. At least Roger has been able to give people a chance to do something. 'You want to write a script, let me see it.' You may get very little money for that script, but by gosh, you've got a movie you wrote, and your name is up there and that's your beginning, your start.

"I think that's pretty wild and pretty wonderful. I think he is a genius when it comes to num-

bers. He knows the numbers and he knows them well. He is close to the vest as far as his money is concerned. You're not ever going to get rich working for Roger Corman—that's for sure—but you will get a chance, and he will give you the opportunity, and you will be able to do good work if you want to do good work. There are very few people out there who are going to give you that opportunity, so I think that's a certain fabulous niche for someone to be in, and I don't see a lot of people like that around today."

After many years, she found working for Corman again in last year's *THE HAUNTED SYMPHONY* to be a very interesting experience as well. Even if it was shot only on stages in Russia, not on an especially exotic location, it did share some of the same difficulties. For example, no one on the crew spoke English, and translators were few and far between. Housing was at a premium, and Garland found herself the only fortunate member of the crew to get either cable or hot water.

Directed by David Tausik, *HAUNTED SYMPHONY* was a co-production between Corman's Concorde/New Horizons and Russia's Mosfilm. In the classic Corman tradition, the film was shot on sets left-over from another production. According to Garland, "Somebody said, 'Come over to Mos-

Garland wrestles with *CURUCU, BEAST OF THE AMAZON* (1956)—well, actually with a real, live anaconda, the danger of which was not fully explained to her.



“They only had one alligator head, and all the other men turning into alligators looked like they had urinals on their heads, so they cut it out.”



THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE (1959) is not one of Garland's better films, but she considers the experience "fun."



film and let us show you what we're doing.' Roger walked in and saw this magnificent castle with these fabulous mirrors, gold leaf, stairways, and gargoyles. They told him, 'If you want to use these sets, we will work out a deal with you and you can do your picture.' So he went back and [had a script written] around the sets, and we went over and did it."

As would be expected, communication was a problem, even with the help of an interpreter. "It was very difficult to work with a Russian crew as a director, I suspect," says Garland, "because you say to your interpreter, 'Tell him this is going to be a wide shot and I'm going to take the camera down and then when we get to the piano, I want to go at a 45 degree angle to the right and come around the piano where I can catch a closeup of Ben Cross.' And she says to the cameraman, 'Das Vadanya Petrohiccough.' He says, 'Did

she tell him everything I just said to her in those four words? I can't believe it.' Now I don't know what she said to him and nobody else knows either, but it took forever to get these shots because cameramen are artists and they have certain ideas, and directors are artists and they have certain ideas."

Garland thinks that director David Tausik had some wonderful ideas, but the language barrier prevented him from obtaining the full benefit of his director of photography's experience. "Sometimes the cameraman has a better idea, because they see it from a different perspective, in a sense of how it will look on the film as opposed to a new director, who is not seeing it that way. Being in the business as long as I've been, doing these kinds of pictures with directors who have not directed very often, or very long, or never at all, I know that you'd better listen to

what the cameraman has to say if he has got 300 hundred films under his belt, or 20 films under his belt, or even five to your half. It was very difficult because of that.

"On the other hand, when the director comes back, as far as

Roger is concerned, he doesn't just have first cut; he has [final] cut. So if he is good at all, then he can cut that picture the way he wants if he's got enough film to do it. Of course, you're on a budget, so you just can't do every bloody angle in town. You've got to pretty well make your master work and maybe your closeups and that's about it, baby. You're not going to take the ones from the ceiling and the one under the table and through his glasses to the mirror up back over the stairway; it's not going to happen."

In the film, Ben Cross plays a drunken choirmaster possessed by a baron whose work on a composition he dubbed the "Devil's Symphony" was interrupted when he was killed by the stereotypical enraged mob from the town below. Forty years later, the Baron's paramour, Carlotta (Garland), still lives in the house. The music room where the Baron

worked on his symphony has been boarded up, until his great niece [Jennifer Burns] inherits the castle. She meets the choirmaster, whom she persuades to finish the symphony, which will resurrect the Baron's spirit and allow Carlotta to take over the niece's body to carry on where the pair had left off.

Corman's deal with Mosfilm provided bigger production values than seen in other Concorde productions, in terms of sets and costumes, but sometimes ingenuity had to overcome scarcity, especially when it came to makeup. "There was very little to work with in Moscow. The makeup people had three things of makeup, but what they could do with those would blow your mind. They are so magnificently talented. As we lived there and worked there, we became more and more tired and ate less and less food that was really good for us, and didn't do any exercise, and were filthy dirty and began to look very haggard, and yet they made us look magnificent. My heart goes out to them. If I had known when I went [how little they had to work with], I would have gone over to France and bought all sorts of makeup and just given it to them because they could use anything.

"There is no cotton. There are no Q-tips. It was just unbelievable. Everyone who went took their own everyday makeup. I took the theatrical makeup I wanted to use. We all took

our own stuff to clean our faces. I took a lot of Kleenex, and I gave away what I had when I left. You just want to give them everything, and they were just so thrilled because they can't afford it. The studio doesn't buy them any makeup; they have to buy their own.

All the wigs were hand-tied, and the costumes were hand-sewn, remnants of a more prosperous time with seamstresses desperately patching the material to keep it presentable. "You go to the studio where everything is falling apart," recalls Garland. "The studio is like MGM was, only probably three times bigger, a huge studio right in the heart of Moscow. And of course, it was run by the state and magnificently taken care of [then], but it's not run by the state anymore, so now it's gone to hell. The windows are broken; the carpets are not clean; nothing is kept up. It's in very bad disrepair, which helps to make you very dirty also when you have to live like that.

"But I would love to go back," she adds. "I've talked to Roger about it. [Mosfilm is] doing ANNA KARENINA now, and they've done sets of Russia in the 1800s, and a castle and a train station. Once that picture is finished, if Roger wants, he'll write a picture around those new sets."

Comparing work on HAUNTED SYMPHONY to work on past Corman productions, Garland comments, "You know, I don't think it's changed a lot. Years ago in SWAMP WOMEN, we were put in an abandoned hotel that fell apart, which he rented for us. It was abandoned because nobody *would* live in it, but we all lived there. Roger always has a deal somewhere."

Discussing their past relationship, Garland says, "Well, we dated. We liked each other. He fascinated me. I loved to see him do business deals, and I think he liked me because he could talk to me, and I wasn't some stupid, insipid actress who was trying to... you know. [But] Roger was not for me, and he knew that. I liked him just as one of my best friends, and naturally we ended up going our separate

"Paul Birch didn't like the way NOT OF THIS EARTH was going and walked off. We had enough film so that we could use a double, and it turned out great."



Never content to sit on the sidelines and wait for men to resolve the plot, a Garland heroine, as in NOT OF THIS EARTH (1957), does her own snooping.

ways. He still fascinates me, and I think he still likes to talk to me. I like bright men, and he's one of them. He's always been one of my favorite people."

Of course, Garland has long been used to dealing with difficulties. For example, during MY THREE SONS, Fred MacMurray had a special contract specifying that the series tie him up for only a few weeks each year, requiring that all of his scenes be filmed first. Because of MacMurray's conditions, Garland was required constantly to be play to a husband who wasn't there the rest of the season. "I had a gal named Katie Barret who was my Fred MacMurray," explains the actress. "When Fred MacMurray asked me to marry him, he wasn't there; I said yes to Katie Barret. He was there for the wedding, which I

thought was very nice of him. You would do the master scene and Fred's closeup, then go on to the next master scene and Fred's closeup. Then Fred MacMurray would go away for three or four months while we did everybody else's closeups. Then he would come back maybe for a week or two to do any bits that we hadn't caught. We would do different pieces from seven or eight different scripts during a day, so sometimes they'd say, 'Cut! Beverly, you do *not* come down the stairs with a big smile on your face, because this isn't the birthday party. This is when the doctor's coming and you're really worried.'"

One of the best films of Garland's career is the often overlooked gem, PRETTY POISON. Though not exactly a horror film, it definitely relates

to the genre courtesy of the casting of Anthony Perkins, who almost seems to be playing what Norma Bates would be if he were innocent—in this case, a hapless dupe who takes the blame for Tuesday Weld's innocent-faced psychotic (the "pretty poison" of the title). "I thought the picture was one of the best of its time," says Garland. "It stands up very well. It got a tremendous write-up in *Time* magazine, and in those days *Time* was one of the hardest and best critical outlets because everybody read what *Time* had to say about anything. I don't know how well it ever did, but I thought it was a sleeper, really a great movie. I thought Tuesday Weld was excellent in it, and Tony Perkins was a very talented actor who just never seemed to do the kind of work he should have. Roddy McDowall hasn't either, and I think Roddy McDowall is a fabulous human being and he can do just about anything. And I think Tony did good work."

Garland plays Weld's mother, Mrs. Stepanek, who is attracted to her daughter's new boyfriend, Dennis Pitt, played by Perkins. "We all brought a little extra to that film," says Garland. "I was hoping that [attraction] would come across. I never knew whether anybody would see it like I saw it or not, but you had to do something with that mother. It was a very small part, so my thing to do with her was to be the kind of woman who wanted Tuesday Weld's boy friend. I made it clear as much as I could make it clear in the film. But it worked and worked well.

"When she's shot, they had lots of stuff where they open the trunk and you see her in there. But they never showed that. They decided that it was too bloody. It was funny because I was wrapped around with this sheet and this bloody face and this bullet hole, and we worked in this little town and people would come up to see if I was all right or what was wrong with me," she chuckles. "They did the shot and said, 'OK,' and I remember the guy said to me, 'You live just half a block down there at the boarding house,'

and I said, 'OK, I'll walk.' I think a lot of people fainted. They thought I was crazy because here I am this bloody mess, with a sheet around me, and I am walking to this house," she says with a laugh.

Nor was that Garland's only experience with makeup provoking unexpected reactions. "When I did the PLANET OF THE APES [TV series] with Roddy McDowall," she says, "on the last day of shooting, I said, 'Fellas, I don't need to stay, and I know how to take this stuff off.' I had gotten so I could take [the makeup] off very fast. They like to have you go in and take it off, because they didn't want you to hurt your skin, but as far as hurting the pieces, there had to be new ones everyday, so it didn't make any difference. So I just said 'I'll just take it off when I get home.' I got into the car and drove from 20th [Century-Fox] as a gorilla, with my glasses. It was seven, eight o'clock at night. I had the radio on, listening to music, and people were going"—she mimics open-mouthed shock—"and I was not paying any attention; I was just driving along. Then all of a sudden, I said, 'Oh my God, I have a baboon face on, and people are looking at me!

"That was really funny," she continues. "It was fascinating to do that show because when you were cast, you had to come in an extra day before you shot and learn how to walk. They put you through those paces of a certain kind of gait you had to have, and a certain kind of talk, and it was fun to do. I could have done it forever."

She may have complained that the monster was too short in IT CONQUERED THE WORLD, or laughed at the men with urinals over their heads in ALLIGATOR PEOPLE, but that is simply reflective of her desire to provide audiences with the best and most professional work possible. As a role model, Garland showed that girls can have grit and gumption, a refreshing change from the namby-pamby scream queens who freak at the first taste of fear in so many forgettable films. As a genre actress, Beverly remains one of the best! □

FALL 1995

SYMPHONY FOR THE DEVIL

Lots to see but little vision in this misdirected stab at Goth-horror.

THE HAUNTED SYMPHONY

A Concorde/New Horizons, Mosfilm Production. Produced by Roger Corman. Directed by David Tausik. Screenplay by Tara McCann, Beverly Gray and David Hartwell, from a story by Louis Morneau. Director of photography: Ylvygheny Korzhenkov. Edited by Michael Jackson & Brian Chambers. Music, Vladimir Komorov & Bruno Louchouart. 85 minutes, 1994, rated R.

Merius Carnot.....Ben Cross
Gabrielle Apollinaire.....Jennifer Burns
Carlotta.....Beverly Garland

by Jay Stevenson

After DUNE, one critic tagged the visual style of director David Lynch as "things to look at rather than a way of looking." I'm not sure that's a fair assessment of Lynch, but the distinction is an important one; in fact, it's one we often see when money buys lots of things to see, but the director involved does not have a way of looking at them that is even moderately interesting.

This thought is particularly striking in regard to THE HAUNTED SYMPHONY, the first co-production between Roger Corman and Mosfilm. Basically, the Russian company supplied sets and costumes left over from previous historical epics. Having this kind of production value at his fingertips was not all that different for Corman from his situation on MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (1965), which shot on sets left over from BECKETT. The difference is that Corman directed MASQUE



The ridiculous coda abandons the possession concept for being too subtle and resorts to prosthetic effects by having a corpse rise from the grave.

himself, and did it with an incredible visual flair that orchestrated those production values into a film that is arguably among the ten best horror efforts ever made.

HAUNTED SYMPHONY director David Tausik, on the other hand, simply points his camera at whatever scene is playing and thus delivers a film of pedestrian monotony. Despite mimicking Corman's patented tracking shots, the visual style leaves the beauties on screen at too great a distance, never involving the viewer in the events.

Not that those events are of particular interest: no one can accuse

Tausik of destroying a good script. The story is basically a rewrite of another Corman directorial effort, THE HAUNTED PALACE (1963), with a young heir inheriting an old castle and an evil soul from the past possessing an innocent dupe who goes about committing a series of murders while picking up where the sinister work left off.

Despite the available sets, the film looks constrained by its budget. (Most obviously, a symphony hall is never seen.) Another weakness is the soundtrack. Adequate as dramatic background music, the score fails to justify dialogue descriptions of the title

symphony that would lead us to expect something on the level of Franz Liszt's *The Mephisto Waltz*.

Why compare this "Devil's Symphony" to a piano composition? Well, apart from everything else, the film neglects to orchestrate the title work; what we hear

is only the original piano score. Okay, that's the way composers often worked during the time period, writing at the piano and arranging the piece for orchestra later, but a film titled THE HAUNTED SYMPHONY should not sound like THE HAUNTED PIANO CONCERTO. □

Below: Cross' choirmaster finds "inspiration" by strangling a victim with piano wire. Right: Cross' double is a bit obvious in this shot of Carlotta (Garland) seducing the choirmaster now that her deceased lover's soul possesses his body.



Ongoing anime epic finds beauty in the blasphemous.

URUTSUKIDOJI III: RETURN OF THE OVERFIEND

A Central Park Media/Anime 18 Presentation. Director: Hideki Takayama. Script: Noboru Akawa, based on the original comic book by Toshio Maeda. Music: Masamichi Amano. Producer: Yasuhito Yamaki. Character design: Rikizo Sekimae, Shiro Kasami. Monster Design: Sumito Ioi. Art Direction: Kenichi Harada. Director of photography: Yoshiaki Yasuhara. Effects: Tomonari Honda, Yota Tsuruoka. Executive producers of English Version: John O'Donnell, Gary Wicks. Production coordinator of English Version: Stephanie Shalofsky. 1995. Running Times: Episode 1 (Urotsukidoji—The Future 1: Birth of The True Overfiend) 60 mins; Episode 2 (Future 2: Mystery of Caesar's Palace) 60 mins; Episode 3 (The Future 3: Collapse of Caesar's Palace) 150 mins; Episode 4 (The Future 4: Journey to an Unknown World) 60 mins. Unrated.

by Todd French

Now spanning 11 original video animation episodes and three feature-length vids (condensing the first nine chapters), UROTSUKIDOJI (a.k.a. WANDERING KID) remains the most unapologetically profane of Nippon's monster-spooge cel rides—and also the most ambitious. Like many of the more benign on-going OVA mellers, it's a sprawling epic, blessed with a cast of such dimensions as to make *Nicholas Nickleby* look like a Pinter redux. A ferocious pop *ferae naturae* made even more objectionable by its ravishing Bluthian palette, UROTSUKIDOJI seizes the moral low-ground via its bent voluptuary's love of: carnage and gore; unbridled misogyny; sexual violence, salacious and lethal; politically incorrect under-age body-heat, and enough degradation, perversion and Kama Sutra curly-Qs to put the Mothers of America off their breakfasts. It's the sort of inhuman, grandiose, id-driven 'toon that could inspire conceptual album salutes from such fin de siecle fret-meisters as Slayer or Danzig. (The OVAs do seem to cry out for heavy metal back-drops; the omission really is surprising.)

So, what separates UROTSUKIDOJI from the OVA flood of such equally numbing, gratuitous tentacle-wraps as LEGEND OF LYON FLARE, L.A. BLUE GIRL, ANGEL OF DARKNESS, and MONSTER HIGH SCHOOL, to name but a few? Well, easy as it is to dismiss the series as so much hysterical demon-porn, there is a very complex story at the center of UROTSUKIDOJI. Bonded with its general igneous appetite for the vile is a



Faust/Munihausen and Amano battle it out on top of Caesar's nuclear arsenal as it speeds toward the still-vulnerable Chojin at Osaka Castle.

fundamental theme of misperception which makes more and more sense as the saga's story unfolds.

UROTSUKIDOJI is (nominally) about a world doomed to a never-ending cycle of cataclysm and rebirth because its three interlocking but supernaturally segregated races are cursed with a fatal incomprehension and self-imposed tunnelvision towards the nature of God as personified by The Chojin. In UROTSUKIDOJI, terrible events transpire because none of the races concede any point-of-view but their own or integrate their half-scrapings of wisdom on the Overfiend into a constructive bid to challenge Fate. In the first three chapters, the consequences of the myopia are especially acute: fervent but naive Beast Amano Jyaku believes in the Overfiend's promise to unite the realms but can't foresee the apocalyptic violence preceding it; Amano foil Suikakuju, like all his demon ilk, grasps only the destructive agenda

of the false-Chojin Nagumo and not the renewal to come at the hands of his and Akemi's child.

What also raises the series above the standard Nippon monster melt-down is its particularly Japanese sense of shigata-gai-nai fatalism—no one, including its pantheon of ambivalent dieties, is able to alter destiny: In the first series, LEGEND OF THE OVERFIEND, likeable teen lovers Tatsuo Nagumo and Akemi Ito are doomed to become the Overfiend's pawns and destroy the world, and Amano, in spite of his demon-thrashing, only winds up indirectly accelerating the cataclysm at their hands; in the second series, LEGEND OF THE DEMON WOMB, when Amano's sister Megumi slays her mortal love-turned-half-Chojin in the (mistaken) belief she's saving "savior" Nagumo, she speeds up the despicable Munihausen II's plan to invoke the Kyoo; and in RETURN OF THE OVERFIEND, even the "God

of All Gods" knows he faces possible extinction by his divine flip-side, Kyoo, the Chaos Lord.

The new four-part follow-up to the first trilogy (Confused? DEMON WOMB is actually a prequel sandwiched in between LEGEND and RETURN) focuses on the up-coming battle for supremacy between Chojin and Kyoo, which will decide the fate of the sundered realms. The vids continue series hallmarks of gratuitous frenzy while hinting at reconciliation waiting in the cosmic wings. On the other hand, the complexity and excess also vie with occasional erratic technical quality and narrative confusion that keep it from ranking with the OVA best.

The plot takes place twenty-some years after the events of the third video, FINAL HELL. The shattered worlds of Humanity, Demons, and Man-Beasts have unified into a new realm peopled by the Make-monos, or Demon-Beasts. These monstrous hybrids, despised by all others, are held in bondage by Caesar, the megalomaniacal cyborg leader of Tokyo who, with the aid of Amano arch-enemy-Munihausen II (now called "Faust"), intends to resurrect the Kyoo and wrest the three worlds from the Osaka Overfiend. Their plan consists of bonding the Kyoo with a demonic entity, "Fabrille," the alchemized distillation of the hatred of Nagumo's victims, culled from the monster's heart.

Meanwhile, the true Overfiend forces his decades-early birth from Akemi to oppose the Chaos Lord, who he believes is manifested in Buju, a free-booting Makemono who leads the Demon-Beasts in raids against Caesar's subjects. Caesar and Faust capture Buju and learn that he's not the Chaos Lord but does possess a psychic affinity with the god. Buju is later released by Alecto, the cyborg simulacrum of the dictator's daughter slain by the Chojin. Buju and the Alecto module subsequently fall in love, but not until she suffers a heinous half-rape at the hands of her monstrous new beau. Their act of "love" somehow invokes the Kyoo in the form of the infant Himi, who proves her formidability by resurrecting Buju (after he's slain by Caesar's soldiers) and then by wiping out the Nagumo demon. When Caesar and Faust manage to get their hands on the godling, it's up to Amano and Kyoo-protector Buju to thwart their plans and untangle the riddle of the Eter-

nal Land's fate and the Make-monos' existence.

But as the nexus of the storm arrives, there persist nagging doubts that make the conflict anything but cut-and dried: infant Himi, the "Lord of Chaos," is the very personification of sweetness and light, whereas the "Osaka Overfiend" is ruthless and sadistic, cynically willing to exploit Amano, smite multitudes, and use Amano's sister Megumi as his agent of destruction. Are Himi and the Osaka Overfiend filling their correct cosmic niches, or is there a mix-up of godheads in the offing?

While RETURN's epic narrative complexity is admirable, the glut of plot points, logic problems, and characters makes the video quartet at times an altogether too rich visual confectionary. Maybe logic is the last thing you expect in an UROT-SUKIDOJI vid (and admittedly the saga is far from over), but basic questions linger: the arbitrary way Himi's powers vary from scene to scene (she can toast the heretofore invincible Nagumo Monster but can't zap one measly Munihausen?); Alecto's decision to blast into outer space with dad's metallized noggin'; the clumsy last OVA intro of cyborg hero and genocidroid Dieneich. Another glitch: whereas Nagumo and Akemi were a good focus for sympathy in the first three OVAs, Buju and the fairly rapid Alecto don't carry nearly the same emotional weight as doomed lovers; also, Alecto's abused monster-boy-toy is even more of a misogynist's wet dream than Akemi was. A problem with having so many new characters is that established leads Amano and Megumi get shoved to the wayside, while Akemi hardly rates a mention. Sadly, some of the animation betrays a cut-corners haste, and scatological

The resurrected Chojin ravishes Megumi, absorbing her powers.



In RETURN, Nagumo, the Demon of Destruction, is possessed by Fabrille, the manifestation of his victim's hate.

dialogue and incongruent dubbing (Buju and Caesar being two of the main vocal gaffes here) surface to debilitating effect now and then.

That said, RETURN boasts any number of scenes that equal the series' beautiful and horrific imagistic elan: a running battle across backs of flying ICBMs between Amano and Munihausen; monstrous Fabrille rising from his cocoon in the form of a hermaphroditic bird-dragon; Nagumo slain by the lethal oral charge of his own laser-spraying penile tentacles. Character and monster design remain one of the top staples, with Caesar a cross between Benito Mussolini and DUNE's Baron Harkonnen by way of Shinya (IRON MAN)

Tsukamoto; an alluring half-mantis demoness also deserves a mention. OVA series score-meister Masamichi Amano provides a versatile mix of the emphatic and tender (with an ironic bit of Dvorak's "New World Symphony" for the initial scenes of Caesar's domain). However, fans of anime and horror should beware: for every bit of supernatural brinkmanship, there's an interminable, nigh-unwatchable rape, like Caesar's violation of Alecto after she tosses him over for Buju (who raped her in the first place—I think you get the picture). As is standard in the world of Nippon anime—and not just the realm of no-holds-barred exotica—the debasement of women remains a depressing constant.

RETURN OF THE OVERFIEND does provide an oddly upbeat angle on heroism through the redemptive trials of the oft-resurrected Buju, one of anime's most masochistically tested characters. With Amano a more peripheral bard-seer-type, Buju takes the forefront as one of the series' most compelling protagonists. From pillaging thug to Kyoo's holy knight, his spiritual rebirth is signalled by a bizarrely occidental series of Judeo-Christian martyrdoms: he's riddled with arrow-like projectiles, St. Sebastian-style, and subsequently "crucified" by Caesar's metal grapplers. Takayama also manages the near impossible feat of in-

vesting fascistic Caesar's desire for godhood with a high degree of pathos; the tragedy is that he can't see the "new world" he has indirectly brought about through his vain machinations. When Buju finally hacks him down to a disembodied head you actually feel for the guy! The formerly insouciant, smart-ass Amano also shows signs of a grudging but burgeoning compassion for the human beings who have now all but superseded him in his quest.

While UROT-SUKIDOJI III may not reproduce the frisson of the series' initial chapter, it is still a thoroughly unrepentant saturnalia of the senses. Whether horror and anime buffs see it as a wallow in base perversion made more obnoxious by pretention, or as a serious piece of adult speculative fantasy, it's not easily dismissed. With most contemporary film fodder settling issues between opposing absolutes, UROT-SUKIDOJI's committed vision of hot-house cosmology—where even divine intervention may be wanting—is one of the most compelling rides in modern-day cinemagination. Though far removed from the travails of leonine Hamlets and wish-granting genies, UROT-SUKIDOJI continues to find beauty in the blasphemous and optimism in the vile, making it inherently positive even at its ultra-violent, inhumanly worst. □

3rd time is no charm for this franchise.

HIGHLANDER 3: THE FINAL DIMENSION

A Dimension (Miramax) release of a Transfilm-Lumiere-Falling Cloud production. Directed by Andy Morahan. Story by William Panzer and Brad Mirman. Screenplay by Paul Ohl. Produced by Claude Leger. Executive Producers, Guy Collins and Charles L. Smiley. Editor, Yves Langlois. Music, J. Peter Robinson; special effects supervisor, Louis Craig. 1/94, PG-13

Connor MacLeod.....Christopher Lambert
Kane.....Marlo Van Peebles
Alex Johnson.....Deborah Unger

by Matthew F. Saunders

The problem facing HIGHLANDER sequels is that the original is a self-contained story. The saga of Connor's immortality begins and ends with the Kurgan: as past and present interact and embellish one another, they move the story full circle, and when Connor kills his opponent and wins the Prize, that's the end. We need not concern ourselves with the "happily ever after."

Thus, there's no place left to take the character. Prequels, which could portray Connor's intermediary years, would lack an essential jeopardy, as his survival is predetermined. And sequels about a domesticated immortal-turned-mortal would be trite and pointless. HIGHLANDER II: THE QUICKENING's solution, recasting the immortals as aliens exiled to Earth, was a gross misstep, forsaking the very premise that spawned it.

Ignoring HIGHLANDER II completely, HIGHLANDER III's premise is perhaps the only passable solution, and it is a one-use trick. The new film reveals the existence of three immortals, buried in suspended animation for 400 years, whose absence from HIGHLANDER's "final" battle means that the Prize hasn't been won. Connor must now defeat these immortals in order to receive the real Prize.

If one forgives this emasculation of the first film's intended conclusion, the premise has potential. What should follow, then, is a meditation on the nature of the Prize: what it is, what the "first one" was and wasn't, and how each did and will affect Connor's life. Significant attention should be given to answering these questions, especially if the audience is to accept that HIGHLANDER's Prize wasn't the real thing.

What we get instead is a formula piece that fails to resolve any of these issues or explore anything new. The rehashing of ideas,



Christopher Lambert has nowhere new to take his character in HIGHLANDER 3.

events, and even dialogue is no less forgivable for being acknowledged within the sequel itself. Making a HIGHLANDER movie is quite different from making a HIGHLANDER clone. As with any carbon copy, the quality deteriorates with replication, and simply overlaying HIGHLANDER's structure onto new characters is not enough to sustain the film or hide its faults.

Equally unforgivable is Kane's easy adjustment to the 20th century and his use of magic and illusion throughout the film. Already a caricature, Kane's quick appropriation of 400 years' of language and technology breaks the trust inherent in the suspension of disbelief; relying on magic to explain this furthers this break. Such disregard severs the viewer's investment in the story. In fiction, there exists a contract between creator and audience, who are willing to suspend disbelief and enter an imaginary world so long as that world is coherent and obeys its own rules. When those rules are broken—by the introduction of previously foreign elements—that world loses its credibility.

HIGHLANDER's world—in which immortals fight for each other's heads, quickenings, and an ultimate prize—is grounded enough in reality that entering it proves fairly easy. The sudden inclusion of magic breaks that contract. Rather than exploring more fully the landscape already present, HIGHLANDER III mires itself in stiff, redressed scenes made new only by the inclusion of misplaced fantasy elements.

The problems are exacerbated by MTV director Andy Morahan, making his theatrical debut. His film

lacks the flow a full-length project. Where videos thrive on rapid-firing images, narrative continuity is essential here. HIGHLANDER's transitions between past and present were smooth, moving back and forth via relevant narrative and visual cues. Here, even present-to-present changes are disjointed. Too often the film offers nothing to string together but short, underdeveloped scenes.

Regardless, this script in the hands of a seasoned director would face the same problems. As it is, the film reduces the Prize: its attainment here is anti-climatic, not epiphanic as in the original, unfortunately suggesting room for further sequels with more hidden immortals. Perhaps it's time to let the HIGHLANDER TV series carry the franchise alone for, at its best, the show successfully explores the HIGHLANDER premise in ways the sequels have not. □

Michael Ironside and Christopher Lambert in THE QUICKENING, the first and worst HIGHLANDER sequel, now shorn of its alien planet prologue.



FILM RATINGS

- Catch it opening night
- Worth seeing first run
- Wait for second-run
- Wait for video/cable
- Fodder for MST-3K

HIGHLANDER II: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT, RUSSELL MULCAHY'S RENEGADE VERSION

Director: Russell Mulcahy. Writer: Peter Bellwood. I.A.C. Films, 108 mins, 4/1995. With: Christopher Lambert, Michael Ironside, Sean Connery, Virginia Madsen.

The cut of this film released four years ago contained new exposition, meant to answer leftover questions, that actually conflicted with the first HIGHLANDER (and you thought the STAR WARS trilogy had problems!). A prologue shows the immortals to be from another planet, where Connery's character (an Egyptian posing as a Spaniard in the original) is inexplicably called "Ramirez," a phony Spanish name he won't be adopting for thousands of years! *Stupid* is the only word to describe this new backstory—at one point, Madsen's character even summarizes the absurdities for us.

Digitally remastered and re-edited, this so-called "Director's Cut" is an improvement, but it's still a bad film that creates as many problems as it solves. All references to Planet Zeist have been deleted, and 16 minutes of new footage better clarify the film's intent. Unlike HIGHLANDER III, which clones the original film, Part II tries to tell a new, albeit flawed, story that extends the (im)mortality metaphor to the Earth itself, through the ozone layer-shield plot. The restored scenes pay significant attention to this, granting greater narrative depth. The problem of removing the Zeist references, however, is insurmountable. The alien planet becomes Earth's distant past—replete with explosions, lasers, and time machines!—and the immortals temporally displaced rebels. One longs for Zeist when Katana (Ironside) can monitor exiles millennia in the future but can't stop them with that same technology in his present. And what does he care what they do in the future? And what, for that matter, do we?

● Matthew F. Saunders
& Steve Blodrowski

NOSTALGIA

By Jason Butina

SILENT SCREAMS

You couldn't hear them, but they echo in today's films.

When was the last time a horror movie was called "a revelation of what the motion picture is capable of as a form of art?"

Not even the Oscar-winning *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* (1991) received such praise. To find a horror movie this revered by critics, we have to look back a long way—before gore, before color, even before the word "monster" was defined by Karloff and Lugosi. Our search for critical acclaim takes us to the days when the screen screamed with silence and "talkies" were just a glimmer in some inventor's eye.

In 1919, bitter from war and repression, Austrian poet Hans Janowitz teamed up with war veteran Carl Mayer (whose "rebellious nature" had been attributed by German army doctors to a mental imbalance) to write *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*. The story was a metaphor for WWI-stricken Germany: the "mad" elite (represented by hypnotist Dr. Caligari) commanded the always obedient peasants (the somnambulist, Cesare) to kill on command for the good of the state. Parents of soldiers killed in the war feared Caligari because he represented a real horror.

Similarly, while Jeffrey Dahmer headlines dominated American newspapers in 1991, another mad doctor showed up to put fear into the hearts of parents everywhere: Hannibal Lecter. Through Lecter and a host of other lunatics and bedlamites, Caligari's legacy survives. Silent horror, like zombies and sequels, just can't be stopped. It comes back again and again. It may chase a different victim or haunt a different house; it may even hide beneath a mask of technicolor and surround sound. But horror from the silent years is alive on the silver screen today.

Modern filmmakers have taken more than just mad doctors from Caligari's cabinet. Secondary characters like Cesare, the sleepwalking killer, become murderous transvestites like "Buffalo Bill." Male detectives become female FBI trainees, hot on the trail of the most recent bloodbath. Heroes and villains alike take their cue from silent counterparts.

CALIGARI and *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* are not all that similar. With a \$20 script and a \$20,000 budget, *CALIGARI* was no multi-



Lon Chaney popularized silent horror in America with his portrayals of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* (above) and *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* (left).

million-dollar Hollywood blockbuster. In war-torn Germany, even electricity was an expensive commodity, making lights and shadows (the stuff of horror atmosphere) a major problem. So producer Erich Pommer decided to paint black and white shadows on canvas—German Expressionist style.

Expressionism, described as "unrestrained, violently emotional, and often pessimistic" (sound like a description of splatterpunk?), became popular during the dark days of World War I. Pommer hired avant-garde artists Hermann Warm and Walter Rohrig to create Caligari's distorted world. The result: an atmospheric carnival of unsettling imbalance which leaves movie-goers begging for the familiar fog-filled sets of *FRANKENSTEIN* and *DRACULA*.

For most early film makers, capturing reality was the key to a good film, and the idea of a slanted, skewed world was a unique innovation. Even until recently, making a fantastic tale look and feel real was the goal. That was until Hollywood turned the reins over to a young filmmaker with a different view.

Tim Burton, who had worked as an animator at Disney before creating the eccentric worlds of *PEEWEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* and

BEETLEJUICE (1988), came upon his greatest challenge in 1989: Gotham City. Batman's home had to have "that black-purple-night ominous feeling," as Jack Nicholson put it. Burton and production designer Anton Furst succeeded in making Gotham the most "disquieting, forbidding, and dangerous" place the screen had seen in years, and *BATMAN* was a huge box office success. After 69 years and few attempts in between, Burton had recaptured *CALIGARI*'s magic.

Like Burton, many modern filmmakers capture glimpses of the silent era. Even movies about the future have their roots in the horror of the past. Case in point: *TERMINATOR 2*, bashed by some critics as an excuse to display special effects, ripped through boxoffice records. Although the story and acting were good, droves of movie-goers weren't interested in plot or performance. *TERMINATOR 2* sold tickets because it delivered on its promise to dazzle the audience with more explosions, more high-speed chases, more terminators, and more action than they had ever seen before. T-2 was hyped as the most expensive movie ever made, and audiences came to see why.

These were the same people who had flocked to *THE TERMINA-*

TOR and countless SF-action predecessors. These were people who wanted the screen to dazzle their eyes, not unlike the audiences who witnessed Georges Melies' camera tricks in late 19th century Paris.

Melies was known as the "White Magician" because he was last of a line of French illusionists who rejected any claim to the supernatural. His first attempts at filmmaking were of everyday events; but one day, while filming a street scene in front of the Paris Opera, that changed—the camera jammed for a few seconds, then resumed. When Melies viewed the film, a bus "mysteriously" turned into a hearse. This accident gave birth to trick photography. The magician in Melies had discovered a new way to create illusion and fantasy.

In 1897, Melies created the world's first movie studio (equipped with secret panels, trap doors, and a mounted, movable camera) in a Paris suburb. He experimented with photography, and before long he had invented stop-frame action, miniature and model work, and superimposition, among other techniques which are standards in the motion picture industry today.

With these techniques, Melies was the first to bring creatures of terror to film. At a rate that would give even Roger Corman whiplash, Melies cranked out movie after movie featuring devils, living skeletons, snow monsters, mummies, and other fiends. With *A TRIP TO THE MOON* (1902), Melies gave the world its first science fiction film, which shows fantastic journeys to and from the lunar surface, battles with moon warriors, and a dream sequence with astrological gods.

Melies' movies were so successful that illegal duplications (even modern video pirates have counterparts from the silent era) made their way to America and became extremely popular. But by the 1920s, the inventor of camera trickery had faded to obscurity, selling toys at the Gare Montparnasse. However, Melies' concept of dazzling the audience with effects that neither reality nor a stage could show, continues to live in modern Hollywood. Gone but not forgotten, the father of monsters, science fiction, and special effects speaks with Schwarzenegger's voice when he promises, "I'll be back."



Long before the genre became popularized in America, Germany had been producing dozens of fine silent supernatural horror films, like *THE GOLEM*.

Although Melies was no longer in the studio in the 1920s, his spirit was alive in a character actor named Lon Chaney. The "Man of a Thousand Faces," through self-created makeup, made himself into hundreds of bizarre and pathetic characters throughout his career. His makeup and portrayal of Quasimodo from *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* (1923) and Eric from *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* (1925) won great popularity for himself and for the genre. By 1930, Chaney had established horror as a profit-maker in Hollywood. So when Universal Studios planned a "talkie" production of *DRACULA*, Chaney was their first choice for the leading role. Unfortunately, he died of cancer later that year, and the role went to Bela Lugosi.

Film horror was born in Melies' Paris suburb and popularized in Chaney's Hollywood. Today, it thrives on television, and movie screens, thanks to directors, actors, and makeup and effects crews who are modern reflections of silent masters like Lon Chaney and Georges Melies.

While Germany made a host of excellent fright films in the early days of cinema (e.g. *NOSFERATU* [1921], *THE GOLEM* [1920], and *THE STUDENT OF PRAGUE* [1926]), America shied away from the macabre before Chaney popularized it in the mid-1920s. Hollywood horror films were rare, and rarer still were excursions into the genre by famous stars. But much like 1992's *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*, the 1920 *DR. JEKYLL*

AND MR. HYDE (directed by John S. Robertson) succeeded in bringing big name talent to the darker side of cinema.

John Barrymore, one of the most famous actors of his time played the dual doctor. Similarly, strangers to horror Keanu Reeves and Gary Oldman stepped out of the bright lights of Hollywood and onto the dark sets of *DRACULA*. The similarities don't end there. Francis Ford Coppola's film is a virtual mirror of Robertson's.

Robertson's Hyde was the first to have two women, one "bad" and one "good." Robertson added the "bad" woman as a sexual foil to Jekyll's aristocratic fiancée. Coppola uses the same technique in his version of *DRACULA*—stressing the duality more than in previous versions. The Victorian virgin Mina (Winona Ryder), who loves the young Prince Dracula, contrasts with the overly flirtatious Lucy (Sadie Frost), who is raped by the wolf-beast incarnation of him.

Both Oldman's *Dracula* and Barrymore's *Hyde* lurk beneath a mask of aristocracy before their evil side is personified. In a rare occurrence for a *Dracula* film, the Count endures dramatic transformations a la Jekyll and Hyde. Stringy, long hair and elongated fingernails, characteristics uncommon to other movie versions of each villain, are among the similar visual images between the 1920 *Hyde* and the 1992 *Dracula*.

Another example of the power of the silent screen is the fact that, of the hundreds of versions of the

Dracula monster to haunt the cinemas, the one that Coppola's most resembles is *NOSFERATU*—exaggerated body features, slow moving shadows, and all. And the resemblance of *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* to *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* and *NOSFERATU* is not an isolated case. Many of today's blockbusters resemble genre flicks from the silent years.

Though not "horror" by some definitions, *THE DEVIL'S ASSISTANT*, made in Germany in 1914, was a testimony of the dark side of human nature, and bears a striking resemblance to the thriller *BASIC INSTINCT* (1992). The Danish actress Asta Nielson plays Hanna, a broken-hearted woman whose alcohol problem and memories of a lost love turn her into the perfect picture of despair. She is an early version of the Michael Douglas character, continuously at odds with his drinking and his past.

Marten is the Sharon Stone counterpart, a painter whose eagerness to create a "true" portrait of degradation drives him to use any means possible to make his model, Hanna, the personification of hopelessness. He even uses the same techniques as Stone in *BASIC INSTINCT*: "He plies her with drink and makes violent love to her..."

Both Marten's painting and Tremmel (the Stone character)'s novel are masterpieces of the macabre, just as both *THE DEVIL'S ASSISTANT* and *BASIC INSTINCT* are dark visions of the eccentric artist. *THE DEVIL'S ASSISTANT* appealed to the educated critics of its day with its classical tragic hero, and *BASIC INSTINCT* appealed to modern American movie fans with its emphasis on sex and violence. But at their core, each tells the same story—further testimony of the silents' legacy.

As long as flesh still crawls at the sight of carnage and audiences still jump when creatures take the screen, filmmakers' desire to capture a good nightmare will be as strong as it was in 1897 when Melies dressed up as the devil. Today's filmmakers look in many directions for inspiration—from blood-soaked newspaper headlines to the latest Stephen King novels. Yet the tools of fear are no farther away than the history of their trade. Horror past is the lifeblood of horror present. Often unnoticed, these dark gems from the days of silent horror lurk in the shadows of the modern cinema, waiting to show new versions of their old and hideous faces. □

(The 1990 Version of the 1925 Production of) *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*

Writer-director: Michael Armstrong. Color: Ron Vancliff. Music: Rick Wakeman. Spectacular Trading Co Ltd, 88 mins. 1925/1990. With: Christopher Lee.

This is a video release of the Lon Chaney silent classic, and its somewhat lumbering title is symptomatic of what can happen to a public domain film these days. Some distributor goes to the trouble of putting it out on video and prevents piracy by making some alterations, which allow him to copyright his "new" version. In this case we get color tinting, new music, and a prologue with Christopher Lee. None of these is such an improvement that you would run out and buy this tape if you already have the film. The prologue is brief, with Lee giving a few details about the Paris Opera house and even fewer about Gaston Leroux and his novel that inspired the Universal production. The tinting (not a complete colorization) is subtly keyed to settings, rather like what was often done to silent B&W films during their original release; for instance, blue for underground or night scenes.

Unfortunately, Wakeman's score is a disappointment. The former Yes-man may have seemed like a perfect choice: his rock compositions have always betrayed a classical influence; *THE BURNING* and *CRIMES OF PASSION* showed he could provide good suspenseful and dramatic background music; and his live solos even used to mimic silent movie accompaniments. But for some reason (probably the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage version), his score consists almost entirely of inappropriate rock songs that barely relate to the on-screen imagery and seldom enhance the atmosphere. This major miscalculation turns the entire endeavor into a feature-length music video.

● Jay Stevenson

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA is available on video with new music and tinting but, alas, no improvements.



IMAGI-MOVIES

CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

OPEN SEASON

Cinematic pseudo-feminism takes a pro-violence turn.

The debate on whether portrayals of violence in art causes acts of violence in real life is a long standing one. Articles on the subject occasionally accuse filmmakers of having a double standard, of using the medium to promote their own values (such as saving the rain forests), while hypocritically denying—when the issue of violence is raised—that their work can influence people at all. What gets lost in this type of rhetoric is the attitude that the film itself takes toward violence; it's as if any portrayal, however negative, is considered an endorsement that will cause weak-willed audience members to act in a similar fashion.

This is a ridiculous standard that no one would think of applying to anything else. For example, John Boorman's *THE EMERALD FOREST* shows modern machinery bulldozing the rain forest, but the film clearly disapproves of this. No one would say that the very sight of those bulldozers would get inside a person's head and make him go out and imitate what he/she had seen, in direct contradiction of the film's intended message.

We should apply the same standard to violence. Some films protest violence through portrayals of violence, and this is no more hypocritical than protesting the destruction of the rain forests by portraying that destruction. On the other hand, there are films that quite openly promote violence as a viable means of problem-solving. We have been subjected to some terrible examples recently, which have, ironically enough, escaped moral censure because their pro-violence stance is masked behind a rather thin veneer of feminism.

TANK GIRL and *DOLORES CLAIBORNE* endorse the killing of men as long as they're relatively slimy. *HEAVENLY CREATURES* doesn't exactly endorse matricide, but it does seem willing to look the other way as long as the perpetrators are lesbians. After all, the big, bad heterosexual world was against them, so what else could they do? As a review in *Cinefantastique* (26:4:59) claims, the film builds a case against "circumstance," proving that events "led inevitably to the crime." Apparently the young murderess was incapable of saying, "Gee, maybe I shouldn't bash my mother over the head with a rock."



TANK GIRL is the worst example of several recent films that actually take a pro-violence stance—as long as the violence is perpetrated by a woman.

After all, it was inevitable. Yeah, right.

DOLORES CLAIBORNE is probably the least offensive of these films. (Okay, the film is not really horror, but it's Stephen King so I'm including it here because it relates to the theme.) Its title character is given the strongest motivation for homicide: her husband (David Strathairn) is molesting her young daughter. The dramatic flaw with the film is that her action is predicated—entirely without substantiation—on the idea that there is no other solution. She never reports this abuse to the police, and there seem to be an unspoken assumption making a report would do no good. After all, the police (as represented by Christopher Plummer's vindictive investigator) are an unsympathetic bunch of men; certainly they wouldn't care about what this man was doing to his daughter.

The problem is further exacerbated by the casting. After playing wimp husbands in *THE RIVER WILD* and *LOSING ISAIAH*, Strathairn is something less than a credible threat, and you have to

wonder why Bates doesn't just beat him up or kick him out. Needless to say, subjects like therapy and rehabilitation are never raised; for the story to work, the husband must be irredeemable. In any case, the message is that it's okay to kill someone as long as you have a really good reason. And it helps if you're a woman and your victim is a man. As the film's oft-repeated refrain tells us, "Sometimes, being a bitch is the only thing a woman has left."

TANK GIRL is much worse; in fact, cataloguing this disaster's flaws would take an entire review unto itself. For our purposes at the moment, it will suffice to say that the film glorifies every action committed by its protagonist (Lori Petty), however dubious. The problem with this approach is that it is intrinsically boring; despite all the attempts to be hip and adult, the character has that sort of aura that surrounds Disney protagonists—who always triumph by virtue of being the protagonist, whether or not the scenario can make that triumph credible.

We're treated to numerous ex-

amples of Tank Girl's failings, as when she goofs off during guard duty, allowing her friends to be slaughtered through her negligence. We're supposed to overlook this and then cheer her on when she exacts revenge, which usually takes the form of a sexual come-on directed at an enemy far too stupid to see she's faking; then, when he drops his guard, she kills him.

Okay, fine, the scumbags in this movie are obviously meant to deserve their fate. But more often than not, Tank Girl's actions are not a matter of self-defense. It took quite a lot to get Louise to pull that trigger in *THELMA AND LOUISE*; all Tank Girl has to do is be in the same room with a guy she dislikes. ("Any of you guys want an oil change?" she offers suggestively while being transported to the villain's lair. When a stupid guard take the offer and unzips his pants, she snaps his neck with her legs. Of course, she could have just kept her mouth shut in the first place—no one was harassing her until she provoked the situation—but we're supposed to think this is cool.)

In the film's low-point, the title character's best friend, Jet Girl (Naomi Watts), proves she's no longer a wimp by shooting an unarmed man who had previously been sexually harassing her—verbally. Now here's a guy who deserves a slap on the face, a punch in the mouth, even a kick in the groin. Instead, he gets a bullet in the brain, and we're supposed to cheer. You've come a long way, baby.

The only recent antidote to this open season policy on men is *DISCLOSURE*. (It has a virtual reality scene, which makes it science-fiction, so I can talk about it here.) Amazingly, this film was accused of being nothing more than hysterical male backlash, when all it really says is that standards for men and women should be the same. The sexual harassment perpetrated by Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore) against Tom Sanders (Michael Douglas) is far more aggressive than in *TANK GIRL*, but imagine the howls of outrage that would have ensued if Johnson had received a similar comeuppance. Those howls should not be any quieter just because, in the case of *DOLORES CLAIBORNE* and *TANK GIRL*, the victims are men. □

Techno-thrillers with "what if" scenarios.

OUTBREAK

A Warner Bros. release of an Arnold Kopelson production. Directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Produced by Kopelson, Petersen, Gall Katz. Written by Lawrence Dworket, Robert Roy Pool. Camera, Michael Ballhaus; editor, Neil Travis, Lynzee Klingman, William Hoy, Stephen Rivkin; music, James Newton Howard; production design, William Sandell; art direction, Nancy Patton, Francis J. Pezza; special effects supervisor, John Frazier; visual effects, Boss Film Studios. 3/95, 127 mins, R.

Sam Daniels.....Dustin Hoffman
Robby Keough.....Rene Russo
Gen. Billy Ford.....Morgan Freeman
Casey Schuler.....Kevin Spacey
Major Salt.....Cuba Gooding Jr.
Gen. Donald McClintock.....Donald Sutherland

CRIMSON TIDE

Hollywood Pictures presents a Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer Production. Directed by Tony Scott. Produced by Simpson, Bruckheimer. Written by Michael Schiffer, from a story by Schiffer and Richard P. Henrick. Camera, Dariusz Wolski; editor, Chris Lebenzon; music, Hans Zimmer; production design, Michael White; visual effects supervisor, Hoyt Yeatman, for Dream Quest Images. 5/95, 112 mins, R.

Lieutenant Hunter.....Denzel Washington
Captain Ramsey.....Gene Hackman
Zimmer.....Matt Craven
Cobb.....George Dzundza
Weps.....Viggo Mortensen
Bobby Dougherty.....James Gandolfini

by Steve Biodrowski

What is science fiction? Fiction about science or a story in which the science is fictional? If the latter is a film like *DESTINATION: MOON* no longer science-fiction now that lunar flight is no longer a mere future possibility? Defining science-fiction is a difficult and, possibly, not very enlightening task, especially when a much better term is already in existence: speculative fiction. We're on clearer semantic ground here, for the technical feasibility of the story is not in question; in fact, the only really pertinent question is the one posed by the story itself: "What if...?"

Two recent "What if...?" scenarios escaped into theatres with promotional advertising that emphasized their mainstream action-adventure qualities while downplaying the speculative nature that places them within the realm of *cinemagination*. In one case, *OUTBREAK*, this is probably a good thing, since the premise is the merest excuse for the cliched theatrics on screen; *CRIMSON TIDE*, on the other hand, does a respectable job of dramatizing its idea and working it through to its conclusion.

By now we all know that *OUTBREAK* is the winner in the race against *CRISIS IN THE HOT ZONE*. Apparently, one of the factors weighing against *CRISIS* was its realism (the book *The Hot Zone* is a true story). Realism certainly



Gene Hackman and Denzel Washington confront each other in *CRIMSON TIDE*.

does rear its head in *OUTBREAK*, which goes well beyond suspension of disbelief almost immediately. Certainly, casting Dustin Hoffman as an action hero places the film squarely in the fantasy realm from frame one.

Whether or not the details of the viral infection are probable, the film does a good job with its test tube and computer hardware, and the details of the symptoms are gruesomely effective. But the essential story is ridiculously drowned in dumb movie conventions, which state that the hero must have a love interest; he will uncover a government conspiracy, the knowledge of which could have prevented the mess in the first place; and he must clash repeatedly with his by-the-book boss, who will have a last real change of heart and help him out. (This last element is rendered predictable by casting Morgan Freeman; the essential decency of the actor's face—this is the man who refused to pull the trigger in *UNFORGIVEN*—telegraphs his eventual conversion.)

CRIMSON TIDE, conversely, seems aware that a cliched villain, a la Donald Sutherland's creepy general in *OUTBREAK*, is a weak plot around which to contrive a techno-thriller. Instead, the film tries its best to portray a conflict between two men of opposing schools of thought, each of whom *might* be right under the present, difficult circumstances.

Setting up this situation requires some truly labored opening exposition, delivered via a CNN talking head directly addressing

the camera. Once all this is out of the way, the movie gets down to something very interesting: the conflict that arises between Hackman's Captain Ramsey and Washington's Lieutenant Hunter is the classic one of experience versus education (Ramsey is one of the few Captains to have actually seen combat experience; Hunter has been to Harvard).

The basic story is simple: When a volatile Russian nationalist faction seizes control of a nuclear missile base, the USS nuclear submarine *Alabama* is ordered to launch its missiles in a pre-emptive strike. A subsequent message—perhaps aborting the launch order—is cut off. Ramsey feels he has his orders and must continue; Hunter wants to surface and re-establish radio contact—a tricky proposition, with a damaged radio and an enemy submarine stalking them.

What sets this film apart is its refusal to turn Ramsey into a wild-eyed psycho villain who wants to blast the Russians no matter what. Although we are clearly supposed to be on Hunter's side, the film goes to great lengths to show that we should admire him for sticking to a correct form of procedure made necessary by the realities of nuclear conflict; in fact, there is no doubt that ultimately there will be no disagreement between the two men on whether or not to launch. What the film ultimately tells us is that, however valuable experience might be, it cannot always prepare us for a rapidly changing future in which old rules are changing and replacing old modes of thought. □

HIDEAWAY

Director: Brett Leonard. Writers: Andrew Kevin Walker and Neal Jimenez. Tri-Star, 112 mins, 3/95, R. With: Jeff Goldblum, Christine Lahti, Alicia Silverstone, Rae Dawn Chong.

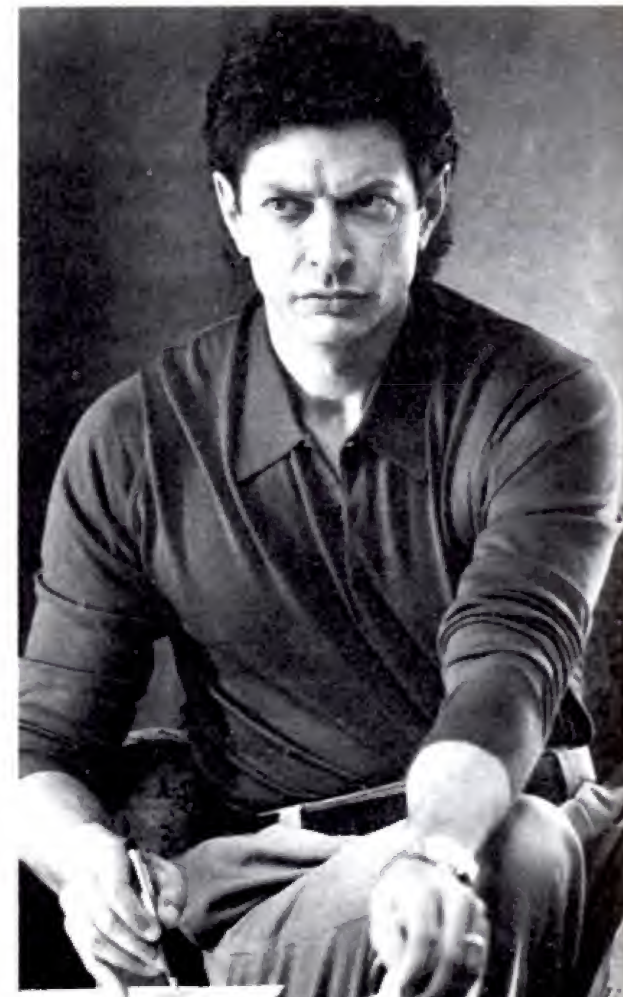
Like many Stephen King book-to-screen attempts, this boring, clumsy adaptation of the Dean Koontz novel (about a resuscitated man psychically bonded to a killer) presents a shell of a story, mired in changes that offer a hollow, rapid translation of the original. As Koontz (who petitioned TriStar to have his name removed from the credits) told *The Hollywood Reporter*, "I understand you have to make...amazing changes to a book to make it work as a movie. But when it becomes a totally different thing, it's hard to deal with."

The novel works on the strength of its characters—through the faith and courage they gain from their relationships and traumas. Hopeless and lost following the death of their son Jimmy, Hatch (Goldblum)'s and Lindsey (Lahti)'s lives are renewed by Hatch's resuscitation and their adoption of Regina, a disabled girl. Significantly absent is the movie-Hatch's near-death experience; the metaphysical is downplayed in the novel, allowing the characters' humanity, rather than the supernatural, to guide their actions and transformations.

The computer-generated near-death and angel/demon sequences, though visually stunning, are obvious attempts to juice up an otherwise flat, lifeless script. Goldblum, Lahti, and the others are given no freedom to explore their characters, becoming slaves to a plot whose only energy lies in these bracketing special effects. The changed family dynamics—a healthy Regina (Silverstone) and an unsupportive Lindsey—offer little drama, relying instead on the token endangered female and doubting, "I-think-you're-going-insane" wife for conflict.

The positive Hatch-Lindsey-Regina relationship, when contrasted with Vasago, is the heart of the novel. Each is replaced in the film by wooden charac-

Jeff Goldblum strives to maintain character credibility in *HIDEAWAY*, but the script defeats him.





(LEGEND OF) ZIPANG is a wonderful Japanese period action-fantasy that got a recent, limited midnight theatrical release.

ters who are as uninteresting as they are cliched, and the material quickly deteriorates into endless scenes of a confused Hatch psychically flashing into Vassago's mind. No amount of special effects can compensate for poor writing, and it's easy to understand Koontz' wish to disassociate himself from the film. Perhaps HIDEAWAY should take a clue from its title and be hidden away itself.

○ Matthew F. Saunders

BRAINSCAN

Director: John Flynn. Writer: Andrew Kevin Walker. Triumph, 4/94, 95 mins, R. With: Edward Furlong, Frank Langella, T. Ryder Smith.

An amusing and even fitfully entertaining twist on the relatively recent "high-tech temptation subgenre" of films like TRICK OR TREAT and 976-EVIL. As with those films, a lonely teen (Furlong) who has trouble relating to his peers falls under a malevolent spell that emanates not from an incantation, but from a modern device; in this case, the technology has been upgraded from stereos and telephones seen in the previous films to CD-ROM, and instead of a disembodied voice, the temptation is personified in the form of the Trickster (Smith).

Although this character is an obvious attempt to establish a Freddy-type franchise, his horror-comedy schtick works better than anyone had a right to expect (his thoughtfully attentive reaction to a televised

the Cryptkeeper wraparound) and instead tells a mythic story of Good and Evil that resonates like a good, old-fashioned horror film.

The script is clever, starting in the middle of the action and keeping the audience guessing until it reveals its exposition late in the proceedings. Ernest Dickerson has a real flare for staging the action and creating an atmosphere that is both believably contemporary and unnervingly spooky. The cast is fine: Zane chews scenery without undermining the proceedings; Sadler puts across his world-weary hero with aplomb; and Pinkett quite effectively manages the transformation from being a bystander to taking the baton from Sadler.

Ultimately, this is still a fairly modest production that is compromised by a few over-the-top gore effects. But what's amazing is that this film, from a first-time director with no history in the genre, can access archetypal horror elements far better than films derived from "official" horror experts like Stephen King and Clive Barker. (Surely, no one would argue that THE MANGLE and LORD OF ILLUSIONS come close to being in the same league with this effort.)

● ● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

THE LAND BEFORE TIME II: THE GREAT VALLEY ADVENTURE

Director: Roy Allen Smith. MCA-Universal Home Video, 75 mins, 1994, G. Voices: Kenneth Mars, Jeff Bennett, Linda Gary.

Made-for-video animated features could almost be called unhappy compromises. In an effort to satisfy the public's supposedly insatiable appetite for both animation and sequels, these "video exclusives" sacrifice quality. The latest of these, THE LAND BEFORE TIME II, is a perfect example. Unlike Disney's THE RETURN OF JAFAR, this offering serves up mostly limited animation and a threadbare plot.

THREE STOOGES short is itself worth the price of a rental. Unfortunately, the film cops out with a lame "it's only a virtual reality simulation" happy ending that lets Furlong's character off the hook instead of forcing him to find a way of the mess into which he's gotten himself.

● 1/2 Jay Stevenson

TALES FROM THE CRYPT PRESENTS: DEMON KNIGHT

Director: Ernest Dickerson. Writers: Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris, Mark Bishop. Universal, 102 mins, 1/95, R. With: Billy Zane, William Sadler, Jada Pinkett, Brenda Bakke, CCH Pounder, Dick Miller.

A complete surprise, this theatrical version of the HBO TV show abandons the campy supernatural revenge melodramatics of the comic book (except in

In DEMON KNIGHT, Billy Zane leads a demon in an assault inside mission-turned-motel.



T. Ryder Smith and Frank Langella in the high-tech temptation movie BRAINSCAN. Watch out for those CD-ROMS!

With none of the original film's makers (the names Spielberg, Lucas, and Bluth are nowhere to be found), LAND II continues the story of young brontosaurus Littlefoot and his prehistoric playmates. Now living in the Utopia-like "Great Valley", the dinosaurs come up against two egg-eating, Raptor-like villains. These dinosaur "bad guys," with their British accents, could have provided a real edge to the film (a la LION KING's Scar), but they are so blandly designed and so incidental to the storyline that they never convey any real menace.

On the credit side, LAND II is faithful to the character animation of the original, and the background design makes an attempt at the lyrical, BAMBI-like mood that Bluth displayed in the first film. The sequel also stresses a nice, coming-of-age theme, that will most likely appeal to very young children.

With a little more time and effort, LAND II could have been an entertaining film for families, and something for animation buffs to savor. Unfortunately, the film doesn't seem to have its sights set that high.

● ● Mike Lyons

THE LEGEND OF ZIPANG

Director: Kaisho Hayashi. J&M Entertainment, 6/95 (1990), 100 mins, not rated. With: Masahiro Takashima, Nami Yasuda, Mikijiro Taira.

This is Japan's answer to all those Hong Kong fantasies from producer Tsui Hark, with the samurai sword replacing the kung fu fist. A soldier of fortune and his comrades, fleeing from bounty hunters and the emperor's ninja, discover a golden sword—actually, the key to the mystical kingdom of Zipang, sort of an equivalent of El Dorado. The anachronistic inventions (including a primitive camera) are amusingly fanciful, and the action and effects are spectacular, but a tendency to dwell on scenes of lyrical beauty slows the pace of the INDIANA JONES-type plot. Not quite as good as the films it resembles, but lots of fun anyway.

● ● Steve Biodrowski

WITCHHUNT

Director: Paul Schrader. Writer: Joseph Daugherty. HBO Films, 12/94. With: Dennis Hopper, Julian Sands.

Perhaps realizing that their first excursion into the oddball world of mid-century magic and fantasy film noir was near-perfect, HBO has chosen to broadcast the sequel, titled WITCHHUNT, as a stand-alone film with no obvious ties to the earlier CAST A DEADLY SPELL. Except for the character of H. Phillip Lovecraft, an old-fashioned private eye at odds with a world filled with magic users, the films are strikingly different in mood, style and execution.

The first film found Lovecraft on the trail of the elusive *Necronomicon*, a book of dangerous spells that can release malevolent monstrosities posing a threat to humankind's continued existence. For WITCHHUNT, any such brain-bending storyline has been jetti-

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Writer-director Jon Jacobs on adapting Fritz Leiber's **THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES**

By Steve Biodrowski

Can a midnight movie still attain cult status in these days of rapid video oblivion? **THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES** (which premiered in L.A. midnight screenings before moving on to Chicago and New York) deserves to be seen on the big screen, even though it is based on a Fritz Leiber story that inspired an old **NIGHT GALLERY** episode.

Debut writer-director Jon Jacobs, who was unfamiliar with the television adaptation, found the story in an anthology at a Florida flea market, after a friend had suggested collaborating on a film. "It was so funny," he says of the story, in which a mysterious model changes the fortunes of a struggling photographer, then turns out to be a psychic vampire living off the adulation directed at her photographs. "I immediately transposed it from San Francisco to Miami and tried to work in a sort of Cuban element."

The script turns the character



Isaac Turner and Christina Fulton in a seductive moment from **THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES**, based on a short story by Fritz Leiber.

into a literal blood-sucker and also provides a backstory that makes her a tragic character, whereas the original remained a completely evil enigma. "I didn't want to explain it, but the question from everybody who read the script was, 'Who is she?' I had just broken up with my girlfriend, so I thought, 'Give her a broken heart; make her a suicide.' In the story, she's an object. This business of being an object actually creates vampires, in a way, because you're feeding your fantasies, and what you feed your fantasies is your life. If there's no balance, you lose your life.

"I wanted to explore the concept of the art deco hotels as sentinels, as conscious witnesses," he continues. "The guy who initially suggested we do a film was good friends with a Cuban painter dying from AIDS in Miami, and during the last few months of his life, he'd be looking up at these powerful buildings and seeing them as witnesses to his life. This friend of mine was involved with the

Left: The almost fetishistic delight with which the film peruses the Girl's seductive stalking of her victims is jarringly contrasted with outbreaks of gruesome imagery. **Right:** "Something about the way she talks makes me want to fuck her real bad"—this telepathically overheard thought from "Henry the Mohawk" (played by director Jacobs) marks him as a victim who is really asking for his fate.

restoration of these buildings. When he went into them, he had an emotional reaction to the fact that they were derelict and felt compelled to restore them. So I tried to bring that in, that an art deco hotel brings her back to life."

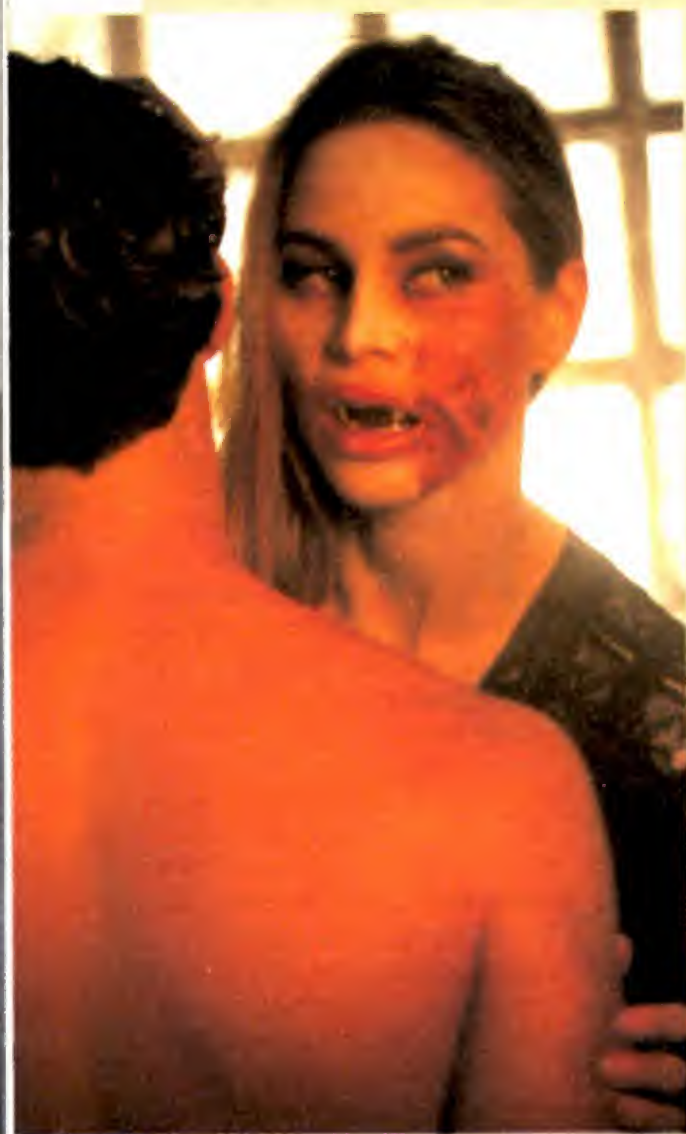
In the film's amusingly skewed view, the resurrected vampire can redeem her suicide by restoring the hotel. This she does by killing people; a la **BURNT OFFERINGS**, the hotel's facade improves with each victim. "The whole thing's a metaphor, so the killings are a metaphor as well, for being victims of her sexuality," Jacobs offers. "These things are big factors in people's lives. When a relationship fucks up, a person says, 'Why me?' and acts like a victim. Then you look back and see that they were cheating or they weren't

giving or they were manipulating. These things give people the biggest grief of their lives."

Though the character seeks a more conventional method of restoration ("My soul depends on it," she deadpans at the conclusion), her sanguinary activities turned off at least one reader. "When my friend read the script, he had no clue what all this sucking blood and ripping off heads was about—I don't think he saw that on an artistic level. He ignored me—not on a personal level, but he didn't pursue the project." A year later, the title caught the eye of low-budget producer Cassian Elwes, in Los Angeles. Since Jacobs had written his script without optioning the story, once the project was set up the producer flew to San Francisco to meet the author, who sold the rights for \$1000. Sadly, Leiber died before seeing the finished film.

Though not a parody, the film's melodramatic extremes produce intentional laughter. "I wanted to explore the humor," says Jacobs. "Polanski's **FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS** was one vampire film that I really loved: it was so bizarre and funny; yet I saw it as a kid, so it was scary at the same time. When I cast Christina [Fulton], she had the physical thing, but I wasn't sure about her ability to be comical. When she got to Miami, she had so many ideas that it became a great game between us, dreaming up far out things for her character. She has a very powerful emotional center, so if something suddenly conflicts with her emotions while she's doing something funny and weird, that comes up behind the humor, and you wonder what's going to happen next."

The film pulls off some reverse motion effects that are genuinely



Bloody Midnight Movie Madness.

THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES

Merton Shapiro and Cassian Elwes present a Kastenbaum Films/Eden West Pictures Production
Written & Directed by Jon Jacobs. Executive producers: David Niven Jr. and Elwes. Producers: Michael Kastenbaum & Seth Kastenbaum. Director of photography: Gary Tieche. Editors: Jason Rosenfelt & Ethan Holzman. Music: Paul Inder and Oscar O'Lochlainn. Costumes: Evelina Diaz. Sound design: George Lockwood. Associate producer: Edward Bates. 3/95, 104 mins, unrated. Reviewed at the Sunset 5 Theatre, L.A.

The Girl.....Christina Fulton
Carlos.....Isaac Turner
Johnny Scarface.....Leon Herbert
Henry the Mohawk.....Jon Jacobs
Amazon Lingerie Bud.....Brett Carr
Zippo.....Leroy "Glamrock" Jones

by Steve Biodrowski

The difficulty facing low-budget filmmakers today is that the appeal of their movies used to stem from the willingness to go beyond the boundaries of what a major studio film would do in terms of visceral impact (whether horrific or sexual in nature). But when mainstream Hollywood is putting out films like *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* and *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*, it's harder for the independents to push the envelope any farther.

But *THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES* does just that. This is a film that dives into the deep end of the pool—and it's not just a pool of blood. Despite a sometimes slack pace and occasionally vague exposition, it's effectively sexy, horrific, and funny, because it isn't afraid to throw all these elements together. Horror-comedies may be a dime a dozen, but this one works, perhaps because the humor derives from the jarring tonal shifts, which occur not only from scene to scene but also within scenes—sometimes within a single shot!

Director Jon Jacobs is abetted in this endeavor by Fulton, whose eyeball-rolling performance is the most enjoyable genre debut in some time. It's hard to say whether she could manage a more conventional role—what's required here is not conventional acting. Wild mood swings—from teary-eyed pathos to arch sarcasm to outbursts of violence—never let the audience settle comfortably into the seats, thinking they know what will come next.

Jacobs employs a more basic approach to vampirism than either Francis Ford Coppola or Neil Jordan could get away with. He doesn't gloss over the horror—to be honest, he doesn't have sufficient production values for gloss, but the result is a kind of primal power lacking in the more polished efforts. The



Before the arrival of the Girl (Fulton, seen above in a typically languorous pose), Carlos (Turner) is having a relatively happy relationship with his would-be model girlfriend (right).

extended "blood-love" scene at the climax is an eye-opener for even jaded moviegoers. Its equation of blood drinking with love-making is taken to erotic lengths unseen in the higher profile films. (This sequence alone warrants some kind of notoriety for the theatrical version of the film; it will be missing from the video prints.)

The film has something to offer beside lurid sex, using exaggeration to satirical effect—as when playboy photographer Carlos insists he's ready to commit himself to her. "Forever?" responds the Girl. "I don't think so!" This care free attitude allows Jacobs to get

away with things that might have scared off other filmmakers. For instance, as if Fulton's lips are not prominent enough, she often speaks through extremely noticeable fangs that exaggerate the contours of her mouth even more. The effect is at once humorous and thrilling, as she deliciously savors each new male victim who casts himself in her way. As the tagline says, "Real vampires play with their food." □



Fulton's over-the-top performance runs the gamut, from seductive to spaced-out to whimsical (above).

startling because (unlike *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*) the shots look normal until some unexpected and impossible piece of action occurs. "It's not difficult, really," Jacobs demurs. "I guess you get it right when you have to; we were so pressed for time that we couldn't afford to get it wrong. Christina was really wonderful. You get such bizarre effects with her hair—it moves in such a strange way."

Unfortunately, the best of these, a reverse-motion backflip when the vampire awakens near the conclusion, will be missing from the 84-minute cut due out on Columbia Tri-Star Home Video "That's got a little less blood in it. The blood-love scene at the end has been trimmed to its absolute minimum; you get a taste of it for one second. It's very interesting. I've been sending out tapes to different people, and the reaction is pretty consistent. So even though my feeling is that it's been butchered, the audience doesn't realize it." Whether there will ever be a restored director's cut "depends on whether it finds its cult status. People have told me it will be a cult film, but I don't know if that can happen without the exposure. I generated some exposure myself [with the midnight screenings], but it's going to take more. When the video is out, then we'll see if it starts to build." □

LASERBLAST

By Dennis Fischer

THE INVISIBLE COLLECTION

Now you can see the Invisible Man's other appearances.

Whereas James Whales' 1932 adaptation of H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* is rightly hailed as a classic, Universal's subsequent variations on this theme, now available on THE INVISIBLE COLLECTION laserdisc, might be almost invisible themselves, so rarely are they discussed, as opposed to the FRANKENSTEIN, WOLFMAN, and MUMMY series.

This is a pity, as they are more entertaining as a group than the shambling MUMMY sequels and are among the few horror films to snare Academy Award nominations (for John P. Fulton's fabulous '40s effects). An experienced cinematographer, Fulton perfected invisibility effects with a combination of rotoscope mattes, multiple-printing, and wire work that holds up well today. For example, in THE INVISIBLE MAN, Fulton arranged to have 64,000 frames individually retouched with a brush and opaque dye to eliminate various imperfections. (For more details on Fulton's effects, see his article in Linwood G. Dunn and George E. Turner's *The ASC Treasury of Visual Effects*).

A three-time Academy Award winner (for WONDER MAN, THE BRIDGES AT TOKO-RI, and THE TEN COMMANDMENTS), Fulton was the special effects master at Universal during its Golden Age (1928-46), moving to Paramount's effects department to replace Gordon Jennings in the '50s (where he worked with George Pal and Hitchcock among others.) The tall Swedish-American was born in Beatrice, Nebraska in 1902 and was noted as a champion golfer, a speedboat enthusiast, a daredevil flyer and a hardnosed perfectionist. He died while working in London in 1966. These features are a true testament to the painstaking efforts of Fulton, one of the cinema's greatest effects pioneers and cinematographers.

This latest box collection of classic monster movies from MCA includes all four serious followups to the Whale classic, albeit not in chronological order. The movies begin properly with THE INVISIBLE MAN RETURNS, one of Vincent Price's very first horror features, a somber follow-up which fails to at-



Universal's box set contains all the INVISIBLE sequels but not the original.

tain the original film's giddy heights of humor or characterization.

Price plays Sir Geoffrey Radcliffe, who when wrongly accused of slaying his brother, Sir Michael, risks taking Dr. Frank Griffin (John Sutton)'s invisibility formula in order to track down the real culprit. The cast is above average for this type of venture, including Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Alan Napier, Nan Grey, and Cecil Kellaway.

German director Joe May brought in Curt Siodmak to help create the plot, starting Siodmak off on a career of scripting horror films, including the next two follow-ups. Composer Hans J. Salter provided this film with one of his best and most frequently reused themes.

However, it is Fulton's Oscar-nominated work which truly shines, even though the staging isn't nearly as effective as in Whale's film, where effects are used to startle, shock, and/or amuse, often simultaneously. Price's invisible outline (seen through rain, fog, and smoke) and the final materialization scene are even better here than Fulton's original work.

Universal's next invisibility saga

was an outright comedy, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN. John Barrymore spoofs his brother Lionel, playing an eccentric inventor who has finally perfected an invisibility serum just in time to save his financially strapped playboy patron (John Howard). The film is directed by A. Edward Sutherland, who also directed the infamous MURDERS IN THE ZOO (1933) along with many above-average comedies of the '30s and '40s.

The attractive Virginia Bruce plays the title role (which was rejected by Margaret Sullivan), a sometimes uncooperative test subject. Charles Ruggles does his patented "befuddled act" for comic support, while Oscar Homolka plays a homesick gangster who will stop at nothing to get the secret in order to leave halcyon Mexico in favor of the bustle of New York. His loyal thugs include Shemp Howard and are portrayed as bumbling as the Three Stooges. Although it never offers any great laughs, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN still proves an amiable enough effort.

Griffin's invisibility formula is drafted by the government in IN-

VISIBLE AGENT, after members of the Axis try to torture it out of Jon Hall's Frank Griffin. Peter Lorre (in his only Universal horror film) is particularly delightful as a Japanese baron who torpedoes Cedric Hardwicke's snobbish boasts of German superiority and who sees gruesome possibilities in using a paper-cutter as a torture device. Hall insists on personally parachuting behind enemy lines to hook up with the equally nominally talented Ilona Massey, then manages to perform the expected schtick while pursuing a list of Japanese spies in America, but never tackles any big Nazi targets. Perhaps Fulton's most ambitious effect is that of an invisible kiss.

The final film of the series (before the inevitable matchup with Abbott and Costello) is the worst of the lot, THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE. Gone are intimations that the formula drives the user mad; instead, Robert Griffin is insane even before he becomes invisible (courtesy of the local mad doctor, played by John Carradine).

Although Hall once more plays a character named Griffin, there is no connection to the Invisible Men of the past. Initially sympathetic, Robert discovers that the only way to regain visibility is a massive blood infusion and immediately drains his erstwhile benefactor, only to discover that the antidote is merely temporary.

The best effect in the film occurs when the now invisible Robert dabs water on his face to make his visage apparent; however, Fulton's work has a slapdash quality, and wires used in the finale are quite visible—unlike the other entries, which were more carefully photographed. The cast is, once more, better than usual, with Gale Sondergaard, Lester Matthews, Evelyn Ankers, Alan Curtis, and Ian Wolfe.

This set lacks the extensive still photos featured on most of MCA's other laser releases of classic monster movies; however, though not listed on Tom Weaver's informative liner notes, the last three chapters (68-70) on side six of the collection are re-issue trailers for every film except THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE. □



Madchen Amick and James Spader in hallucinatory ending of last year's *DREAM LOVER*, an unfairly neglected femme fatale movie with enough dream-like imagery to edge it into the genre.

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soned in favor of a rather standard whodunnit that takes place in the Hollyweird of the 1950s.

Perhaps hoping a more familiar face would catapult this proposed series into the stratosphere (or at least help keep its head above water), HBO hired Dennis Hopper to take over the Lovecraft role played to perfection by Fred Ward in the first film. Hopper's mug is better known, but the actor seems almost ill at ease with his surroundings, as if having second thoughts about playing second banana to a second-rate blend of humor and horror. And without much to actually do in the film, Hopper is unable to conjure a performance rivaling that of his lesser-known predecessor.

There are other serious trouble spots in *WITCHHUNT*. Foremost is the storyline, which is severely undernourished and uneventful. Then there are the essential magic elements which worked so well in the first film. Unfortunately, they're so underutilized here as to seem merely dragged in to prop up an otherwise rather creaky mystery story. *CAST A DEADLY SPELL* deftly mixed fantasy and comedy with the slightest hint of horror—wrapping it around a plotline that was just grandiose enough to make it worth producing in the first place—but *WITCHHUNT* takes the "magic is real" schtick and shoves it in the midst of a political plotline as onerous as it is ordinary. Perhaps the blame must rest with Joseph Daugherty's screenplay, which turns Lovecraft from a resourceful and occasionally clever P.I. into a candidate for something on the order of *DUMB AND DUMBER*. Alone in a world that has acqui-

esced to the forces of darkness, Daugherty's Lovecraft seems like a stubborn, maladjusted neurotic who deserves every unlucky break he gets. Lovecraft refuses to call upon the dark arts to aid his quest, preferring to unravel perplexing mysteries through the use of sheer guts and old-fashioned brainpower—but these are elements which appear to have vanished from the character's repertoire. To be fair, there are a few good moments here, but for the most part, three magical milestones fall flat with an excruciating thud.

Production values are standard for an HBO production, which means *WITCHHUNT* is solidly crafted without being unduly flashy. There aren't many special effects, and what's there is mostly of the straightforward camera cutting variety. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but if you're going to be using low-key tricks of the trade—a la Coppola's *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*—you'd better be at the ready with a first-rate storyline that will capture your audience's attention. *WITCHHUNT* doesn't do that, and in the end it's just another so-so fantasy-cum-comedy with big stars, big sets, but very little imagination.

● Randy Palmer

THE SWAN PRINCESS

Director: Richard Rich. Writer: Brian Nissen. New Line, 11/94, 90 mins, G. Voices: Jack Palance, Howard McGillin, Michelle Nicastro, John Cleese, Steven Wright, Sandy Duncan.

Disney has nothing to worry about if this is the best the competition can do. This film is way too cartoony for its own good, using animation for sight gags well suited to a comic short, but out of place in a romantic story derived

from *Swan Lake*.

For all the aping of recent Disney conventions (this is after all a fantasy-musical love story, with a strong-willed female lead and a vacuous male protagonist), director Rich seems to have missed the key element to that studio's success: Disney does not make feature length cartoons; the studio produces animated films that compare favorably in storytelling and technique to contemporary live-action films. The talking animal characters, a frog and a turtle voiced by Cleese and Wright, do generate a few decently amusing moments. But the lead characters' supposedly moving dilemma is undermined by the levity of the approach.

● Steve Blodrowski

Princess Odette returns to her castle after an argument with Prince Derek in New Line's *THE SWAN PRINCESS*.



ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD

Director: William Dear. Writers: Doro-Kingsley, George Wells, Holly Goldberg Sloan. Buena Vista, 7/94, 102 mins, PG. With: Danny Glover, Tony Danza, Christopher Lloyd.

This shameless attempt at being "uplifting" is pretty effective at pulling the strings it wants to, showing Glover's grouchy baseball manager gradually warm up to the kids who tell him his team is suddenly winning because of the intervention of the titular angels. What nearly destroys the entire endeavor is some badly employed special effects.

The stated message is that inspiration and faith in oneself can turn failure into triumph. But it's a little hard to buy this when what we see is that this hopelessly incompetent team is incapable of winning without the angels' intervention. Soaring through the air like *STARS WARS*' X-wing fighters, these whimsical spirits lift players twenty feet in the air, kick the ball out of the opposing team's gloves, and all but play the entire game themselves. Though technically impressive, the special effects don't belong in this movie, which required a much subtler approach, a la *FIELD OF DREAMS*.

● Steve Blodrowski

OVERLOOKED & UNDERRATED

DREAM LOVER

Writer-director: Nicholas Kazan. Gramercy, 103 mins, R. With: James Spader, Madchen Amick, Bess Armstrong.

Very strange effort from the son of the famous director Elias Kazan. Recently divorced, Ray



ANGLES IN THE OUTFIELD: Danny Glover with Milton Davis Jr. (center) and Joseph Gordon-Levitt (left).

(Spader) meets the adorably perfect Lena (Amick), who seems to be the woman of his dreams. Needless to say, she eventually turns out to be not quite what she seems, but what's interesting is that the series of revelations about her character refuse to oblige us with the shock we expect; instead, step by step, every detail of her deception seems understandable and even forgivable. Only at the very end is she unmasked as the standard movie psycho-bitch, but as she informs Spader (whom she's manipulated into being incarcerated in an insane asylum), "Psychopaths need love, too."

Along the way, Kazan uses a series of dreams to take us into Ray's mind and make some not very flattering revelations about the protagonist. Particularly, the "dream lover" of the title turns out to be not to be Lena at all but his first wife, who divorced him for spousal abuse; in other words, the ills that befall him are because of his own failings, instead of being blamed on the intervention of Lena. The genre-demanded violence-and-retribution rears its head only toward the end. The film actually manages to make this last-minute piece of emotional manipulation work on a visceral level, and the coda is strangely ambiguous: a hallucinatory, swirling shot of Ray dancing with a woman who is alternately Lena and his first wife. Another dream, or has Ray really gone insane? The film is all the more intriguing for not offering an easy answer.

● ● 1/2 Steve Blodrowski

AFM

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high-definition, everybody said, 'Wait a minute. High definition is television; we're doing a movie.'

Added production designer David Snyder, whose credits include *BLADE RUNNER*, "There was a lot of resistance to high-definition, but there are so many advantages. There was so much color and texture available beyond what we would normally get: each time we turned the dial on the system, it was the equivalent of reloading the camera with film and sending it to the laboratory; we could do 15 or even 1000 lighting conditions. You get instantaneous results. We'd be doing an effects shot in front of a green screen, and we could take an element shot days or weeks before and composite it right on the set, without waiting for two or three or five elements to be loaded into the camera and sent to the laboratory."

With computer effects replacing optical printers in many post-production facilities, films like *JURASSIC PARK* and *TERMINATOR 2* are already being digitized during the editing phase. So the question is: if films are to be digitized anyway, why not photograph them digitally? On a \$12 million budget, *RAINBOW* contains 40 minutes of "digital events," including special effects and color correction. According to the filmmakers, the cost of transferring those 40 minutes into the digital domain would be more than the film's post-production budget.

"The technology hasn't changed since *THE JAZZ SINGER*," according to Ackroyd. "So it's about time there was a jump in technology." The self-confessed "mechanics freak" went on to explain his interest in working on a film that used high-definition: "I'm very interested in anything that has the benefit of a lower budget in regards to special effects, because I wrote *GHOSTBUSTERS*, and there was a tremendous amount of expense that went into that. I could see the possibilities as a writer and originator. There's really no place that we can't go; it's limitless. I'm very anxious to see the video transfers to film. I think high-def is the future of a large part of our industry."

Would Ackroyd consider high-definition if he ever directs again? "It would depend. If it were a special effects film, I would probably try to approach it that way. We'll see how this experiment turns out, and we'll analyze that. It would come in handy on a film like the one I did direct [*NOTHING BUT TROUBLE*, 1992]. We had all kinds of stuff where I could have used digital effects and not had to wait around."

With only one previous directing effort (*RAGGEDY RAWNEY*), Hoskins is not a high-tech director like Robert Zemeckis, but acting in *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT* assisted him here. "If you work with

anything that technical, it's got to rub off some. I think because of *ROGER RABBIT*, I had the confidence to direct this. If I hadn't done *ROGER RABBIT*, I don't think I would have done this." □

POCAHONTAS

continued from page 7

he later used as his first catalyst for Pocahontas, pinning the photo near his desk so that it could serve as a "daily reminder."

With the help of an overhead projector, the animator then sketched Pocahontas, showing the audience how the final result is different in appearance from past Disney heroines ("If you had a race between Pocahontas and Snow White in the woods, Snow White would be left in the dust"). Before leaving the stage, Keane scribbled "\$2,000" next to the sketch and joked that any bidders could see him after the presentation.

Animation is only one of the defining factors behind *POCAHONTAS*. Music is another element that has become a hallmark of a good Disney film. For *POCAHONTAS*, the Disney studio brought composer Alan Menken back into the fold. Sitting at a piano, Menken gave the audience a look into what has gone into past work with both Tim Rice and the late Howard Ashman. For *POCAHONTAS*, Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz (*GODSPELL*) researched Native American sounds and music. One of the songs, "Colors of the Wind," is a powerful ballad that Pocahontas sings to John Smith, conveying the Native American philosophy of man's relationship to the world around him. At the presentation, Judy Kuhn, the singing voice of Pocahontas, wowed the crowd with a live rendition.

After this wonderful conclusion to the *POCAHONTAS* segment of the presentation, Disney switched to other upcoming animated projects. *TOY STORY*, a joint-effort with Pixar, is the first ever all-computer animated feature. Computer animation pioneer John Lasseter is directing this modern day fable of two toys, a cowboy doll and an action figure, who are forced to team up so that they can escape the clutches of the neighborhood's "toy-torturing kid." In addition to ground-breaking technology, *TOY STORY* also boasts an all-star cast of voices, including Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Annie Potts, Wallace Shawn, and Don Rickles.

The next two traditional animation features will be *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* (1996) and *HERCULES* (1997). *FANTASIA CONTINUED*, due for release in 1998, promises to carry on a wish that Walt Disney had for the original 1940 classic. Walt intended *FANTASIA* to be somewhat like a concert that would return every few years, with new sequences added

and old ones removed. Fear not: Roy Disney promised that "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" will be retained in *FANTASIA CONTINUED*, and new musical sequences will be created—one of which will serve as a vehicle for Donald Duck! □

RAISING THE DEAD

continued from page 14

tion—fly head and arm—which stretches the bounds of credulity beyond the breaking point. Rescued from a life of flydom, Andre's son chose not to return in *CURSE OF THE FLY* (1965), which in fact contains no flies at all. The story offered Brian Donlevy as another member of the DeLambre clan, still working on the buggy matter transmitter, with only an occasional mutational mishap gumming up the works.

Like the 1958 original, David Cronenberg's 1986 remake of *THE FLY* destroyed its monster (Jeff Goldblum), but Fox virtually remade *RETURN OF THE FLY* two years later. Again, the son of the original inventor becomes the mutant, who is returned to normalcy at the finale.

Toho's *GODZILLA* series usually failed to connect each film with what had gone before, although they sometimes used sleight-of-hand techniques to hint at connections where none really existed. Having been skeletonized in the original 1954 film, the Big G was "revived"—in name only—two years later for *GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN*, which actually featured a "brother" of sorts to the original lizard, but one dinosaur pretty much looks like another, so many audiences didn't notice the difference. American distributor Warner Brothers thoughtfully retitled the film *GIGANTIS, THE FIRE MONSTER*, which helped smooth over the transition. The climax of the sequel had Godzilla/Gigantis buried under tons of rock and ice, from which he is reawakened in *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA*—probably Toho's only direct continuity resurrection.

Audiences were forgiving of continuity lapses in these films, so subsequent efforts merely had Godzilla re-emerge from the sea. The series got sillier and sillier until it was finally "killed" by bad box office. After a long hiatus, *GODZILLA* 1985 pretends to be a direct sequel to the 1954 progenitor, with the intervening years having presumably erased audience memories of both the original beast's dissolved skeleton and the previous sequels. Although not itself a remake, *GODZILLA* 1985 inaugurated a new series of sequels, which often were remakes of the old sequels.

With *Leatherface* (*THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*), Michael Myers (*HALLOWEEN*), Jason Voorhees (*FRIDAY THE 13TH*),

and Freddy Krueger (*A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*), a new pantheon of horror icons has developed to take the place of the boogymen that haunted our nightmares during the '30s, '40s, and '50s. However, with the advent of the de rigeur final frame stinger (you think the monster's dead, but then he lurches back to life for one more big scare before fadeout), it became a much easier task to bring the characters back—since, after all, they had never been definitely dispatched in the first place! Despite this crutch, many of the films had trouble maintaining continuity or simply didn't bother.

In any case, history has proven that bringing characters back from the dead is never as difficult as it is profitable. Just check what's supposed to happen to Ripley in *ALIEN 4*: in case you haven't heard, she was cloned before she did her fiery freefall in *ALIEN 3*! As they say, where there's a will, there's...ahh, you know. □

BATMAN FOREVER

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new Batmobile can go over 100 mph, and it has a flame 25 feet long. I wanted the audience to really see that. By using real streets, we were able to have much longer and faster runs with the cars. There's a really fun sequence with the Batmobile and this incredible Dodge armored car from 1941. So one of the first things we shot was Wall Street. [Director of photography] Stephen Goldblatt lit it pistachio green, raspberry red, and lemon yellow—all these incredible comic book colors, with all this smoke and steam. Then to send the new Batmobile at 100 m.p.h. down Wall Street with a 25-foot flame—it was exciting!"

Schumacher estimates that when the film is released on June 6, it will have been exactly two years since he was offered the "the corporation's largest asset," as the Warners execs put it. "I said I couldn't even think about it unless Tim [Burton] wanted me to do it," Schumacher recalls, "because Tim and I have been friends since he hired a lot of special effects people from *LOST BOYS* to do *BEETLEJUICE*. I went to see him, and he really wanted me to do it—because he didn't want to do it! So I decided to do it, thinking to myself as I left, 'Gee, is anybody interested in the third *BATMAN* film?' Then the deluge of gossip, rumors, and attention started, so the good news is people are interested. I'm very happy for that, because we worked very hard to make something people will enjoy seeing this summer." □

BATMAN RETURNS

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the sixth and most ambitious musical collaboration between Burton and composer Danny Elfman, who

IMAGI SALES

shared his first foray into film scoring on Burton's own feature debut, *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* (1985). "I knew that it wouldn't be a rehash of the first movie," says Elfman. "True, it is a sequel, but it's very different in tone. It's a lot sicker, a lot more twisted—and more Tim, for lack of a better word."

The score proposed numerous challenges for Elfman, such as providing *leitmotifs* for "not one but two new characters, who occupy more screen time than Batman. It's quite fun in that respect because the bulk of the score revolves around them. Also, it's unusual to have three main themes. Usually you only have one, maybe two, and then the secondary themes which play underneath, but here it's literally three main themes, each one as dominant as the next."

The result, he claims, goes far beyond its predecessor. "This score is much more of a theatrical onslaught than the first. *BATMAN* was more traditional, while this one is very over-the-top and peculiar. In fact, I didn't realize until halfway through that it's as much an opera as it is a movie, almost as if you'd expect the curtains to open and close after each scene, like some weird little sideshow."

According to Elfman, "I'll take rough ideas and spend a few weeks refining them by looking at the key scenes for each character. Then I'll see if these scenes lend themselves to being bent in different directions. For instance, will the Penguin's theme play both sinister and bittersweet? Will the Catwoman's theme play both fun and twisted? Will it play both as a loss of innocence and as a frolic in a department store while she's destroying stuff? Once I've put the raw material through this test, I'll bring Tim in and play him a presentation of maybe a half dozen key scenes where the thematic material stretches in these different directions and we'll talk through it."

Burton adds, "When you're dealing with material that's completely unreal and showing characters trying to have real emotions in an unreal world, it's crucial to have the music set the tone and provide the audience with that emotional guidepost. It seems like the more out of reality you get, the more you tend to lose people, so the music just grounds it. It even helps tell you what the movie's about a lot of the time. It's so important and I've been very lucky with Danny because he's completely got that tone now."

Though scheduled to wrap in December, production ran through to late February with Hollywood gossip mongers touting a bloated budget of \$80 to \$90 million, and that's before the marketing costs. Warner spokespeople quote a more realistic figure of \$50-\$55 million. According to co-producer Larry Franco, any cost overruns and

overscheduling is the price the studio pays for directorial ingenuity. To make his point, Franco compares Burton to director John Carpenter whom he partnered on most of his pictures from *ESCAPE TO NEW YORK* to *THEY LIVE*. "Carpenter is a craftsman who takes the written page and actually puts it on screen," he says. "He's very mechanical in that he knows he's got to get a certain amount of work done in a certain day. He's responsible to the budget and the schedule and he comes in planned knowing each shot and how it's going to be laid out for the day's work."

"Tim Burton on the other hand works in an entirely different way," he continues. "He can give us the elements that he's going to need for a certain scene, but he can't specifically tell us what he's going to do and how he's going to shoot it until he sees everything all together. This makes it very difficult for us to assess how long it's going to take to shoot a specific scene. At times it gets completely frustrating, but I just keep bearing in mind that Tim Burton is a genius and his movies are brilliant. I found myself constantly having to remind the studio of that."

For the result of which, we can be truly grateful.

HARRYHAUSEN REPLY

continued from page 62
tures, didn't they?

Ray Harryhausen was indeed upset that a photo caption in Part One (not written by me) referred to Darlene O'Brien as his "housekeeper," but he did not withdraw his cooperation based on this typo. And, truth be known, Darlene (rest her soul) kept the house in Pacific Palisades; Ray and Diana lived in London at least eleven months out of any given year.

I think the tone of the piece was commensurate with a critical examination of works done over a specific time period under certain limitations. It offered a balanced view not only from the technical perspective (and there are only so many "secrets" Harryhausen can reveal) but also from the practical production standpoint. Rather than write a puff piece or a one-sided opinion, I dealt not solely with Harryhausen's contribution to the films, but the genesis, practical realization, and public reception of the works.

ERRATA

Apologies to Tony J. Severino, for the misspelling of his name in IM 2:3. Dan Person's review of *RANMA 1/2* should have been accompanied by a 3-star rating. And Dan Cziraky, author of last issue's review of *THE SANTA CLAUSE* and *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* would like it known that he spelled "Santa Claus" correctly.

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LETTERS

WILD ABOUT HARRYHAUSEN

After a fourteen year wait for the next installment of your Ray Harryhausen retrospective I'm sorry to say I'm quite disappointed. Although the article's use of some directorial and production anecdotes (with lots of expletives) makes for a more "humanistic" view of the production of Ray's mid-career films, the lack of archival graphic materials to back up the text makes for a rather flat overall presentation. Your editorial points out that you have afforded a considerable amount of space to this talented visual artist. It is reasonable to expect that the visual part of the article would be more than the usual group of lobby cards and reread production photographs that have turned up in just about every R.H. article since the dawn of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

In a time when a person can go to a well-stocked video shop and buy a copy of any one of these films for under 20 dollars, it behooves a specialty magazine like *Imagi-Movies* and its surrounding family of publications to go the extra step in unearthing the rarely or never before seen. It's been your stock in trade in the past and makes the lack of this type of material all the more glaring.

As a long-time fan of Ray Harryhausen and Clarke Publications I hope the next installment, no matter how long it takes to appear, will rectify this oversight.

Peter Michael Parrella
Brooklyn, NY

I wish people would stop criticizing the alleged "flaw" of stop-motion—the stroboscopic effect it creates to the eye—when in fact this utter lack of motion blurring is the art form's biggest quality. Strobing causes the viewer to pay closer attention to the stop-motion creature, because stop-motion movement is far more eye-popping and attention-grabbing than conventional blurred movement. That strobing is in fact a genuine quality is shown by the now-common use of stroboscopic video cameras at sporting events.

The Ted Newsom piece mentioned several criticisms of *GWANGI*, namely misalignment of wire-ropes during the roping of Gwangi, a circus elephant that supposedly wasn't too realistic, and the fact that Gwangi changes colors during the film. The wire-ropes are a situation that I doubt anyone could have helped. The color changes on Gwangi (most noticeable in the bat-

tle with the styracosaur) are so minor that they really aren't worth commenting on. Finally, just what is wrong with the doomed circus elephant? That battle was some of the best Harryhausen animation of all.

Michael Daly
Wakefield, MA

Ted Newsom's second installment on Ray Harryhausen is fairly enlightening, but it leaves much to be desired in some respects. It does not have quite the abundance of information on his composite techniques, models, etc. that distinguished the first part of the series, which is considered a pretty definitive piece by most R.H. fans. But worse than that, this article takes a "down" approach to the production of the films. Not only does Newsom needlessly quote insults hurled at several people involved in making these pictures, but throughout there is a continual and rather nasty assault on Charles Schneer. Why expend all this energy to portray Ray's longtime partner in such an unflattering light? There were certainly fights on the sets between the principals involved, but to illustrate Jack Sher and Don Chaffey's points of view without giving Schneer an opportunity to rebut is patently unfair. The best approach to intrigues such as these would have been to simply state that "they disagreed on production values" or such, instead of citing streams of obscenities and derogatory comments. Ray has noted that Charles and he have had many differences of opinion in the past. No doubt this is normal when making decisions on various facets of filmmaking.

I was astonished by all the negativism, which is detectable from beginning to end. Does Mr. Newsom realize what impact his essay might have upon the subject? A friend of mine told me that because he made the mistake of calling Mrs. Willis O'Brien a "housekeeper" at his Pacific Palisades residence in the text of the first part, he lost the cooperation of the "stop-motion maestro," who was offended by the inference. I don't know if this is actually the case, but it would explain the hiatus between the two writings. Ted should have been aware that his topic, who he clearly admires, does not appreciate this very sort of cynicism. What I am getting at is that focusing in on the critical aspects of making these movies is antithetical to the beliefs of this effects master. At any rate, I hope the third segment of this series will discuss the things us Harryhausen

fans want to read, without including unnecessary gossip and innuendo.

Roy P Webber
Escanaba, MI

Ted Newsom replies:

I admire the work of Ray Harryhausen, but I'm not a fanatic; if I was, I'd be blinded by the magic and ignore the rough points. Ray's vision is justifiably praised, but he was seldom given a fighting chance with an A-budget, a really good script and a top-rank cast. With due respect and love to Kerwin Matthews (who I think was the best of the three Sinbads), imagine what Errol Flynn or Tyrone Power would've brought to the role.

Mr. Daly's pro-strobe argument takes me and others to task for pointing out that stop-motion looks different from ordinary movement shot live. The lack of blurring in Dynamation-type processes makes the image look unnatural and unreal; thus Harryhausen (and others) have an uphill battle when creating visuals that should be as "natural" as the live action. I don't dislike the process; it's wondrous. But it calls attention to itself.

On *GWANGI*, I pointed out minor flaws in a major aesthetic success. The color shift in the dinosaur, the minor gaffes in the rope sequence, and the animated elephant are not gigantic problems, and I doubt anyone demanded their money back after seeing them, but if one is to do an in-depth critical analysis of the work (and in so doing, watch the film carefully more than a half-dozen times), one is going to see those things.

With due respect to editor Steve Biodrowski, I agree that the layout of Part Two was a little more conservative than the *CFQ* piece. When we started, I had hundreds of photos, blow-ups, sketches, and posters, from Sher, Chaffey, Lourie, et al. Unfortunately, after Part One ran 14 years ago, the materials were returned to their owners without being copied, and the men have since passed away. To quote Ray, "We did the best we could with the time and money we had." We had to strike a balance between art and a strict deadline.

Now, as to the withering blast from Mr. Webber, let's set some things straight:

The entire three-part article, from Ray's childhood through *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, was written fourteen years ago, while Ray was promoting *CLASH*. Steve Biodrowski added more comments from Mr. H. before we went to

press. The only other additions for Part Two were an interview with Bill Bast on *GWANGI* and material on *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* (I had interviewed the stars and producer for my video documentary on Hammer, *FLESH AND BLOOD*). The entire article being of a piece, it would have been redundant for the second segment to re-explain processes detailed in Part One (with exceptions, like the sodium process).

Charles Schneer clearly didn't become bosom buddies with Don Chaffey and Jack Sher, both of whom were strong, opinionated storytellers, on film and in person. If you recall, Curt Siodmak and Christopher Knight did not necessarily paint Mr. Schneer in the most flattering hues in Part One. To have copped out with a bullshit phrase like "they disagreed on production values" is nonsense. These guys held grudges against Charlie Schneer some 25 years later: that's not a disagreement; that's a blood feud! Again, if you could read the entire piece, the portrait of Schneer becomes more rounded. Patrick Wayne (in Part Three) says, "Charlie's the kinda guy who throws nickels around like manhole covers. But a couple years after we worked together, I'd made a picture in Spain and the producers weren't going to pay me. Charlie called up out of the blue and told me to use his lawyer for free. That's the kind of guy he is."

The pictures never would have been made without Schneer. Ray probably would have become a top effects-gun-for-hire like Gene Warren or Jim Danforth, at the mercy of an assortment of idiot producers. I have never met Mr. Schneer, but had access to transcripts of others' interviews with him. In editing Part Two, I actually cut several of the more harsh comments on Schneer. Why? Because subsequently I've directed and produced films and videos, and I understand what he went through. He was the salesman who argued and cajoled and rode everyone and squeezed every last dime (or pence or peso) out of a budget; the guy who would march into an executive's office and pitch a project that only consisted of six charcoal sketches and a three-paragraph outline. It was a symbiotic partnership. Without Schneer, Harryhausen never would have had the opportunities he had; without Harryhausen, Schneer might have been just one more graduate of the Sam Katzman B-picture unit. Together they made pretty good pic-

continued on page 61

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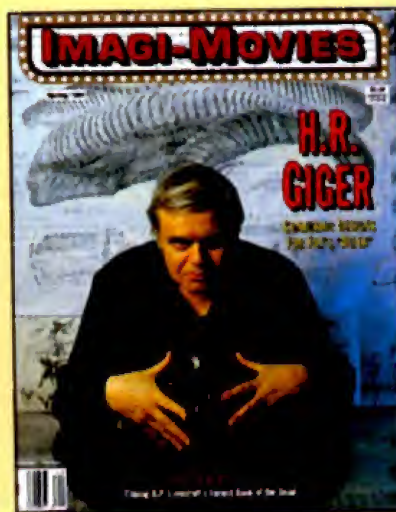
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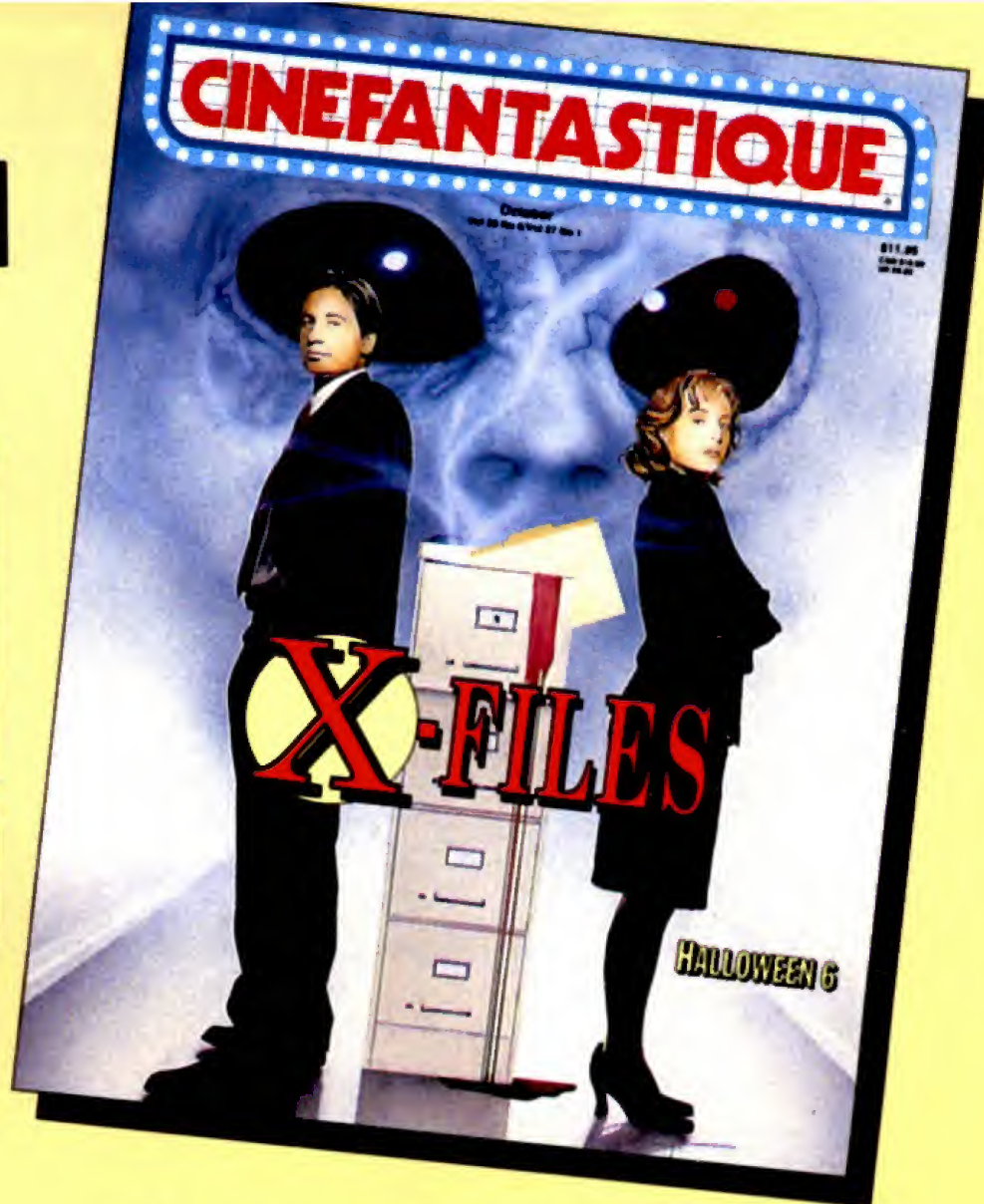
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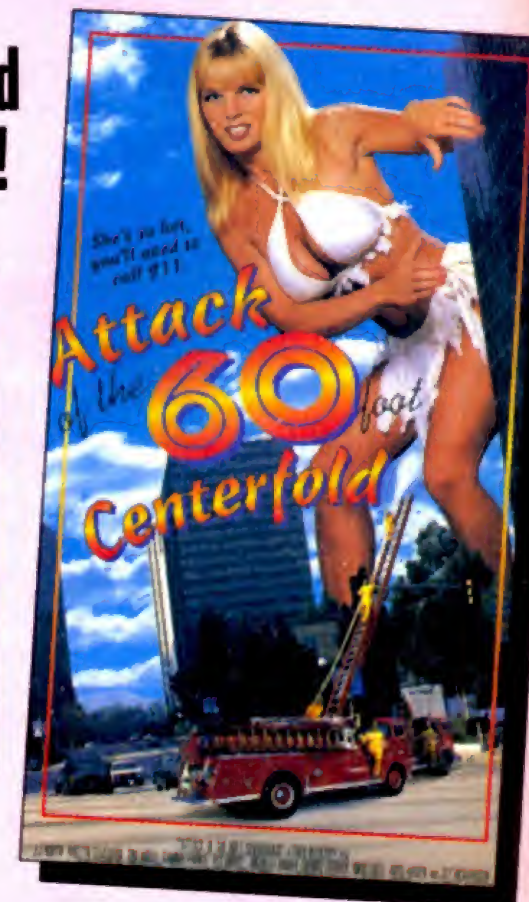
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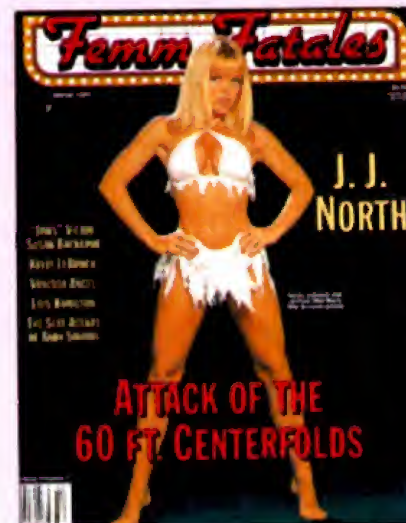
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